



AUGUSTA HISTORICAL BULLETIN

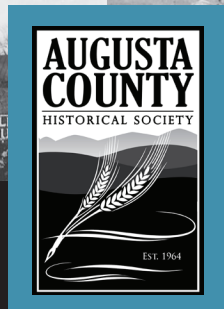
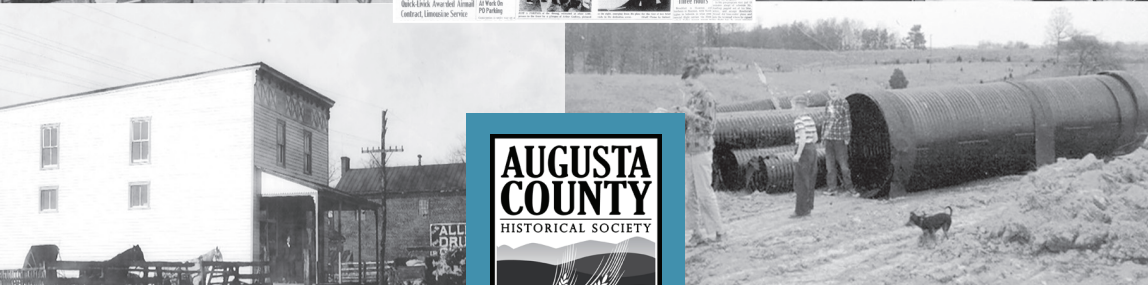
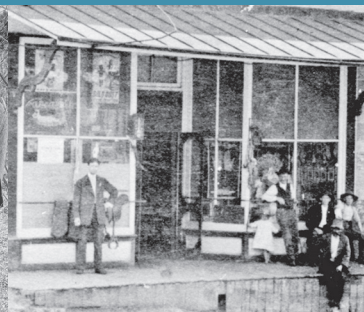


**AUGUSTA  
COUNTY**  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



EST. 1964

# AUGUSTA HISTORICAL BULLETIN



Founded 1964  
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P.O.Box 686  
Staunton, VA 24402-0686

VOLUME 57 – 2021



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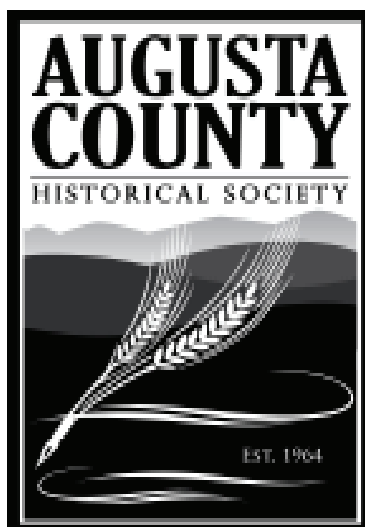
# Augusta Historical Bulletin

Published by the

AUGUSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Founded 1964

Post Office Box 686  
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## Augusta County Historical Society

A purpose of the Augusta County Historical Society is to publish the *Augusta Historical Bulletin*, which is to be sent without charge to all members.

The membership of the society is composed of persons who pay the following dues as of June 1, 2021:

Annual (individual).....	\$45
Annual (family).....	\$65
Annual Student (high school/college).....	\$20
Annual Institutional.....	\$100

Membership renewal notices are sent out based on the month in which you joined the society.

### NOTICE

**It is urgent that the society be promptly notified of changes of address. Bulletins that cannot be delivered by the postal service will not be forwarded due to high postage rates.**

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**Augusta County Historical Society office and research library are located on the third floor of the R.R. Smith Center for History and Art at 20 South New Street, Staunton, VA 24401. A parking garage is located across the street.**

*Cover design by Jennifer Wood Lee*

# Remembering two past presidents



**Mary Beirne Nutt**

*Mary Beirne (Kerr) Nutt*

October 2, 1940—September 4, 2021



Mary Beirne (Kerr) Nutt died September 4, 2021, at her residence in Staunton following a long battle with Parkinson's disease. She was born on October 22, 1940, in Staunton to the late Hugh Holmes Kerr, Jr. and Mary Beirne (Jones) Kerr. Mary Beirne grew up at "Waverley" and was a graduate of Stuart Hall School in Staunton and Converse College in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Mary Beirne was a dear friend, mentor, and history leader to those in the Society. She served as the Augusta County Historical Society's president in 2002 and 2003, but her service to the society and her dedication to the preservation of history and the telling of our community's story was a lifelong passion of hers. She was involved with the Society for decades on committees, as a board member and advisor, and as a participant in our myriad activities and events. In 2013 we presented her with the Society's highest honor — The Distinguished History Service Award.

Mary Beirne had an encyclopedic memory when it came to history and especially genealogy. She could not be stumped when queried on a genealogy question. She had a dry wit and a way of stating something without being dismissive.

Mary Beirne married Robert Hasbrouck Nutt in October 1962 at Trinity Episcopal Church in Staunton. She was the seventh generation

member of her family to worship at Trinity. Mary Beirne and Bob lived in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania, New York City, and Chatham, New Jersey, before returning with their two children to Staunton in 1977. While in New Jersey, Mary Beirne was an active member of the Junior League and the League of Women Voters.

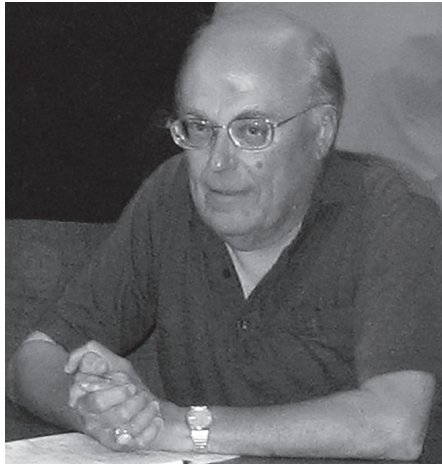
Upon moving back to Staunton, Mary Beirne devoted herself to a variety of artistic, educational, historical and genealogical organizations. She served as president of the Staunton Fine Arts Association where she loved the annual “Art in the Park” event at Gypsy Hill Park and the “Art for Gifts” holiday shop. She was also a proud member of the Class of ‘57 at Stuart Hall School and served on its Alumnae Council. She was delighted when, in 2012, the school named her “Miss Stuart Hall” and gave her a crown and a bouquet of long-stemmed, red roses. The roses wilted in time, but she loved wearing that crown!

Having deep roots in Staunton and Augusta County, Mary Beirne believed in the importance of historical preservation, research, and education. In addition to her work with the Augusta County Historical Society, her love of history extended to family histories as well and she was active in various associations, including the Daughters of the American Revolution (where she served as Registrar of the Beverley Manor Chapter), the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the Edward Howell Family Association.

In addition to these organizations, Mary Beirne was an avid reader and music-lover. She treasured her time working at the Staunton Public Library. Working at the library combined her love of books with her love of people. Many people have fond memories of Mary Beirne’s friendly face behind the counter and her enthusiasm for reading. She also adored attending Heifetz and other community concerts with her husband Bob, and they could often be seen sitting together in the front row enjoying the music.

Mary Beirne leaves behind her husband Bob of nearly fifty-nine years; her children Mary Beirne Touchstone of New York City and Robert Hasbrouck Nutt II of Virginia Beach; her grandson Daniel Evan Young and his wife Laura of Waynesboro, Virginia; her granddaughter-in-law Kali Ann Stern of Vacaville, California; and her great-granddaughters Claire Emma Young and Elizabeth Rose Stern. She is also survived by many nieces and nephews and her four siblings: Hugh Holmes Kerr III and his wife Ida of Miami, Florida; Sara Evelyn (Kerr) Hunt and her husband David of New Canaan, Connecticut; Elizabeth (“Tizzy”) Antoinette Kerr and her husband Buddy Swint of Charlottesville, Virginia; and Junius Edward Kerr of Albuquerque, New Mexico. In addition to her parents, Mary Beirne was preceded in death by her grandson David Robert Stern.





**Dr. Kenneth Keller**

*Dr. Kenneth W. Keller*

October 29, 1943—January 9, 2022



Dr. Kenneth W. Keller passed away on January 9, 2022, at the University of Virginia Hospital in Charlottesville, Va. He was born October 29, 1943, in St. Louis, Missouri, the son of the late Walter Keller and Helen Fern Keller.

Officers and members of the Augusta County Historical Society board remember Ken as a longtime colleague, past president, and former society archivist. Ken was a member of the society from the time he came to Staunton in 1981 to join the history department at Mary Baldwin College. A St. Louis native, Ken graduated from Washington University with his BA in history. As a scholarship student, he attended Yale University where he graduated in 1971 with his M.Phil. and Ph.D. with a focus on American colonial history.

On their first date he told his future wife that “the only thing I ever wanted to do was teach American History;” and teach it he did. Dr. Keller taught history for eleven years at Ohio University and Ohio State University and for thirty years at Mary Baldwin College, offering courses in all areas of American History with specialized courses in Women’s History, Lewis and Clark, and History of the American West. He published over forty journal and encyclopedia articles and reviews as well as book chapters and articles focused on western Virginia. He also won a substantial grant from the U.S. Department of Education for a three-year program for public school teachers in the Shenandoah Valley: “Teaching American History: Decisive Events.”

Ken had a special interest in the social history of the Shenandoah Valley, its religious communities, and its German and Scots-Irish settlers. In his long career at Mary Baldwin, Ken served many years as chair of the history department, and developed and introduced courses in Native Americans and in women's history.

Among his many published articles were several in the Society's *Augusta Historical Bulletin*. To the delight of all, he presented a number of ACHS programs on those topics. Perhaps the most memorable body of Valley research that he was known for was his work on the Valley Turnpike (today U.S. Rt. 11), an historic road referred to as "The best thoroughfare in the South." He also delved deeply into the history of decorative Moravian tiles known as Mercer tiles. The handmade tiles were a product of the Moravian Pottery & Tile Works in Bucks County, Pa. Henry Chapman Mercer founded the company in the early twentieth century and the decorative tiles produced at his establishment are found in several buildings in our area that feature architecture from the Arts and Crafts movement.

From his first arrival in Staunton, Ken became a part of the Society's inner circle as a long-standing board member and then as president in 2004 and 2005. When he retired in 2011, he accepted the role of archivist of the ACHS, following in the footsteps of other distinguished Society archivists such as Richard M. Hamrick, Jr. He served as archivist until 2019.

Ken worked closely with the ACHS archives committee in its massive ongoing project of cataloging the collections. His annual reports in the *Bulletin* are a testimony to the progress of that committee's work and to the richness of the collections. In 2019, the Society presented Ken with its highest honor, the Distinguished History Service Award. We are grateful for Ken's service to the Society, to Mary Baldwin, and to the larger history community. We regret the loss of a respected colleague, and we extend our condolences to his wife, Dr. Susan Green.

Dr. Keller loved gardening, and he and his wife spent many summers traveling through the American West, visiting tribal reservations and historical sites along the way. Trips also included visits to relatives and friends in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Missouri, and California.

Dr. Keller is survived by his wife of twenty-six years, Dr. Susan Blair Green, and by his stepson, Seth D. Green, as well as by his extended family and friends. He was much loved as a gentle, kind, and generous man who never lost his love of learning. He is deeply mourned and missed by those who knew him best.

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## *Augusta Historical Bulletin*: Editorial Policy

The editors of the *Augusta Historical Bulletin* welcome submissions relating to any topic or period in the history of Augusta County, Virginia, and its wider environs. Submissions may take the form of articles, research notes, edited documents, or indexes to historical documents. Other formats might be acceptable, but prospective authors of such submissions are encouraged to consult with a member of the editorial board. With rare exceptions, the *Bulletin* does not publish manuscripts that focus exclusively on genealogical matters. Authors should strive to make their contributions accessible to a broad readership. In matters of form and style, authors should adhere to the guidelines and strictures set forth in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15<sup>th</sup> ed., or Kate L. Turabian, et al., *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., both of which are widely available in libraries and bookstores. A style sheet, prepared by the editors of the *Bulletin*, is available upon request. Authors should submit four double-spaced copies of their manuscripts, with endnotes where applicable, and include photocopies of any illustrations. Upon acceptance of the manuscript for publication, authors must provide an electronic copy of it, as well as publishable-quality illustrations.

**Manuscripts or requests for style sheets should be sent to: The Augusta County Historical Society, Attention: Bulletin Editors, P.O. Box 686, Staunton, Virginia 24402-0686. Please try to submit proposed manuscripts by September 1, 2022. Queries may also be sent to: Nancy Sorrells (lotswife@comcast.net).**





# Finding a way to serve:

## Staunton and Augusta African American women in WWII

By Melissa Patrick

***Editor's Note:** Melissa Patrick is a Staunton native who spent a twenty-eight-year career in the U.S. Army, attaining the rank of colonel. During her Army career, she obtained advanced degrees in military history and the strategic arts and taught military history at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. After retiring, she returned to Staunton and joined the Thomas-Fields Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7814, the area's historically all-Black VFW post, which sparked an interest in the history of local African American military service. She has researched the stories of the hundreds of Staunton-Augusta African American men who served in World War I and is working on identifying those who served in World War II. She also has an interest in the Staunton-Augusta women who have served in the military starting in WWI. This article is an outgrowth of combining those interests.*

When the U.S. entered World War II, women looked for a way to serve in the war effort. The Army created the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in May 1942. Women from the Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro area joined either the WAAC (later the Women's Army Corps) or the Army Nurse Corps. Among them were nine African-American women who stepped forward to serve their country.

### **Helen Streibling**

The first woman with a connection to Staunton who enlisted in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was Mrs. Helen Streibling. Helen Devon Jones was born in Staunton and graduated from Booker T. Washington High School (the one located on Sunnyside Street in Staunton before the current Booker T. Washington was built.). At a young age, she married a Staunton World War I veteran, Harrison Streibling, in Pennsylvania. She served in the WAAC/WAC from September 1942-November 1945. Her service is particularly noteworthy in that it spanned the spectrum of WAC assignments available to African-American women in WWII with service at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, the Army's largest training center for African American troops, as an Air WAC in support of the Army Air Force, and in the only Black WAC unit to serve overseas. She reentered the service in 1949 and served until 1951, after which she resumed her earlier career of teaching. She also earned

a degree from Central State University and served as an AME pastor.

The Streiblings lived in Pennsylvania, where Helen was a teacher and the president of the local Welfare League of Negro Women in the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> After the WAAC opened for enlistment, she signed up on September 10, 1942, and attended basic training and the administrative school at Fort Des Moines, Iowa.<sup>2</sup> Upon completing training, she was assigned to the WAAC unit going to Fort Huachuca, Arizona.<sup>3</sup>

Organized in Iowa in the fall of 1942, the 32d and 33rd WAAC Companies arrived at Fort Huachuca in December 1942, becoming the first Black WAAC units



*Helen Streibling*

assigned to an army post anywhere in the U.S.<sup>4</sup> At the time, Fort Huachuca, which was the historic home of the two Buffalo Soldier cavalry regiments (the 9th and 10th Cavalry), was the training center for the 92d and 93d Infantry Divisions, making it the largest Black military training center in the country. Despite the large numbers of African American troops based there (at least 20,000 Black soldiers at one time), the post was segregated like all other army posts. Upon arrival, the WAAC units were greeted by an enthusiastic crowd of 10,000 and the post band. Third Officer Harriet M. West, one of the first African American women officers to graduate from Fort Des Moines, served as the representative of Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby, Director of the WAAC. Later, Helen Streibling would be assigned to the first African American WAC

### *Twelve WAACs Take Oath Here*



Lieutenant Colonel J. N. Marx administered the oath to 12 more district WAACs yesterday, the largest contingent to be sworn in at a single ceremony here. They are, front row, left to right, Phyllis Ritter, Mrs. Katherine Gregg, Marjorie Fidel, Mrs. Veronica Yankovich, Lois Johnston

and Sarah McKee; back row, left to right, Bernadette Hammer, Mrs. Lois Rice, Dorothy Gorman, Mrs. Helen Streibling, Anna Tomajko and Mrs. Oricea Palmer. Captain E. J. Pernar, in charge of WAAC recruiting, and Mrs. Dorothy K. O'Brien, WAAC interviewer, stand at attention, far right.

*Helen Streibling enlisted in the WAAC in September 1942. She is pictured in the middle of the back row at the edge of the flag. (Photo from Pittsburgh Post-Gazette)*

detachment supporting the Army Air Corps as well as the only Black WAC unit to go overseas. Another Staunton native, Irene V. Carr was in that unit as well.

### **Helen Pannell and Frances Howard**

Corporal Helen Pannell was the first Black woman living in Staunton who enlisted in the WAAC, doing so on October 7, 1942.<sup>5</sup> The next day, Frances Howard (the future Mrs. A. R. Ware) also enlisted in the WAAC. After initial training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, the two



*Helen Pannell (Miller) was the first Black woman from Staunton to enlist in the WAAC on 7 October 1942. She and Frances Howard (Ware) served at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Corporal Pannell was discharged 27 August 1943. Ancestry.com. Public Member (Photos and Scanned Documents)*

women were assigned to the two WAAC companies at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Under the command of Captains Natalie Donaldson and Frances Alexander, commissioned in the first class of thirty-six African American women officers, the auxiliaries of the 32d and 33d companies performed clerical and administrative duties such as being stenographers, typists, telephone switchboard operators, clerks, messengers, receptionists, motor pool drivers and mechanics.<sup>6</sup>

Helen Pannell was trained as a typist and Frances Howard, who was a graduate of Virginia State College (now Virginia State University), worked in the library of Service Club No. 2, which served nearly 3,000 soldiers a week.<sup>7</sup> PFC Howard, known to the soldiers as “Frankie,” served until November 1945. Upon her return to Staunton, Frances Howard became the school librarian and a history teacher for Booker T. Washington High School. She was also school librarian at Shelburne Middle School after Staunton’s schools were desegregated.<sup>8</sup>

### **Mary Maupin and Irene V. Carr**

Mary Maupin and Irene V. Carr followed Helen Pannell and Frances Howard into the service in March and April 1943 respectively. Corporal Mary Maupin, a Booker T. Washington High School graduate and a second year student at Virginia State College, received special post-basic training at the Army Administration School in Des Moines, Iowa, followed by assignment to the administration office of the Fort Dix, New Jersey hospital. A year later, she was a postal clerk at Fort Dix.





*Led by their commanders, the women of the 32d and 33d WAAC Companies arrive at Fort Huachuca, Arizona on December 4, 1942, after six weeks of training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. These were the first African American WAACs assigned to an Army post. A crowd of 10,000 soldiers and the Post band met the arriving women. Helen Streibling was one of the 200 Auxiliaries who reported to Fort Huachuca. Staunton natives Helen Pannell (Miller) and Frances Howard (Ware) were assigned to these units in 1943.*



*The WAACs of the 32d and 33d Companies at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Photos top right and two bottom photos were taken by Charles Steinheimer for LIFE magazine*



Civil rights activist and educator Mary McLeod Bethune, top left, was a key figure in the selection of African American women as officers. A friend of Eleanor Roosevelt's and a member of President Roosevelt's unofficial "Black Cabinet," she served on the advisory board creating the Women's Army Corps and lobbied for integration. She was personally involved in the selection of the first forty African American officer candidates, ensuring that they were the best of the best. Upper right: Charity Adams Earley, the first female African American officer commissioned in the WAAC, she commanded the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the only Black WAC unit to serve overseas. Stauntonians Helen Streibling, Irene Carr, and Alice Mae Allison (Jones) served under her command. She attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, making her the highest ranking African-American female officer in WWII. She said, "You don't know you're making history when it's happening. I just wanted to do my job." Lower left: Harriet West Waddy, who had worked for Mary McLeod Bethune in the 1930s, was one of two Black women who attained the rank of Major in WWII (Charity Adams was the other) and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1948, three years after the war. She served as an aide to Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby, director of the WAC and was an advisor to the Army on racial issues. Lower center: Captain Natalie Donaldson was commander of the 33d WAAC Company at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Stauntonians Helen Streibling, Helen Pannell, and Frances Howard served under her command. Captain Donaldson had a bachelor of music degree from the University of Michigan and was a music teacher. She served with the Aircraft Warning Service for ten months prior to enlisting in the WAAC. Lower right: Captain Elizabeth Hampton commanded the Air WAC unit that served at Walla Walla, Washington, Wendover, Utah, and Sioux City, Iowa. Stauntonians Helen Streibling and Irene V. Carr served under her command. Captain Hampton was a graduate of the University of California with a degree in social work and was a case work supervisor in Los Angeles before the war.

Corporal Irene Carr, who was a hospital dietician at King's Daughters' Hospital in Staunton before joining the Army, was assigned to the 860th WAC Post Headquarters Company, which was the first unit of Black WACs supporting the Army Air Corps. Under the leadership of Lieutenant Elizabeth C. Hampton, this Air WAC unit served initially at Walla Walla Army Airfield, Washington, the location of the 2d Air Force's training of B-17 bomber crews. Later, the unit was reassigned to Wendover Airfield, Utah, a training base for B-17 and B-24 bombers, made famous as the home base of the Enola Gay. The Air WACs were ultimately assigned to the Sioux City Army Air Base, Iowa. The Air WACs performed a broad range of duties described in an April 1944 newspaper article as personnel, operations, courts and boards, adjutant, public relations, statistics, special services, medical detachment, ordnance, air inspection, photography, quartermaster supplies, parachute repair, machine work, laboratory and dental technicians, chaplain's assistant, and airplane engine mechanic. More than half of the women in the unit were college educated, with an average age of twenty-four, and one quarter scored high enough to qualify for officer's training.<sup>9</sup>

### **Moving mail—The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion comes through Alice Mae Allison, Helen Streibling, and Irene Carr**

Initially, the Army had no intentions of deploying African American women overseas. Under pressure from African American leaders and organizations to do so and also facing a very real morale problem in the fighting forces as millions of pieces of mail piled up in England, the Army created the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion to go overseas and clear out the backlog. In November 1944, African American women from across the WAC, the Army Service Forces, and the Army Air Forces were recruited to form the battalion. Both Corporals Irene Carr and Helen Streibling were among the 855 women hand-picked to join the only African American WAC unit to serve overseas, the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, commanded by Major Charity Adams, the first African American woman to achieve the rank of lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army. TEC 4 Alice Mae Allison (who later married Oscar Jones of Jones Funeral Home) was also a member of this very select group.

Trained for overseas duty at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, the women went through tactical training, crawling under logs and jumping trenches, climbing ropes, doing ruckmarches, and learning to identify enemy aircraft.<sup>10</sup> In February 1945, the battalion sailed to Europe with the mission to fix a badly broken mail system, which was a key factor in maintaining soldier morale in the fight against the Nazis. Helen Streibling recalled that "It took us sixteen days to





*Major Charity Adams, Battalion commander, inspects the soldiers of the 6888th Battalion, lined up in front of their barracks in Birmingham, England.*

travel by ship to Scotland, without any convoy, and every day was filled with tension.”<sup>11</sup> Upon arrival of the first contingent in Glasgow, Scotland, a German V-1 rocket exploded near the dock, causing the women to run for cover.<sup>12</sup>

From Glasgow, they traveled to Birmingham, England, where they found hangars full of mail bags, which were piled to the rafters. Under Major Adams’s leadership, the battalion organized itself to work 24/7 sorting and clearing the mail and processing an average of 65,000 pieces of mail per shift. They worked in dark, unheated, damp, rat-infested buildings, sometimes undergoing nighttime air raids to move millions of pieces of mail.<sup>13</sup> One member of the unit commented about the buzz bombs, “You could see them, and then you didn’t know where they were going to land,” she said. “You had to go get



*The women of the 6888th participate in a victory parade in Rouen, France, passing through the marketplace where Joan of Arc was executed. (Source: National Archives and Records Administration)*



*A group of soldiers of the 6888th Battalion in field uniform at Camp Shanks, NY prior to embarkation for England. TEC 4 Alice Mae Allison (Jones) is standing, third from left. The members of the 6888th sailed to Europe in February 1945 on either the Ile de France or the Queen Elizabeth. (Source: U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Lee, Virginia)*

into a shelter. Just drop everything, and just run.”<sup>14</sup> Complicating the task was the fact that many pieces of mail were addressed just to single names such as “Buster” or “Junior” or to soldiers with common names; there were 7,500 “Robert Smiths.” They also had the responsibility of identifying and returning mail intended for those soldiers who had been killed. Given six months to clear out the backlog, these hard-working, dedicated women with the motto “No mail, low morale,” completed the task in three. Not given a chance to rest on their laurels, they were sent to Rouen, France, to move the accumulation of two to three years of backed up mail. While in Rouen, three members of the unit were killed in a jeep accident and were buried in the Normandy American cemetery. Clearing out the backlog in Rouen in three months, the unit was moved to Paris, where they dealt with an additional challenge, the theft of packages by a war-starved populace. CPL Streibling and TEC4 Allison returned to the United States on board the Queen Mary in November 1945<sup>15</sup> and were discharged shortly thereafter.





*Members of the 6888th work with French civilians to sort the mail. (Source: U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Lee, Virginia)*

### **Maude Crawford Blackwood**

Maude Crawford Blackwood, who had been born in Staunton in 1898 (she was seven months shy of the upper age limit when she enlisted), was an art teacher at Elizabeth City State Teachers College in North Carolina when she joined the WAAC in March 1943 and made history as part of the Black WAC Band.<sup>15a</sup> When African-American WACs tried out for the official WAC band at Fort Des Moines, which was the first all-female military band in U.S. history, none of them were deemed qualified, regardless of their musical experience. Major Charity Adams wrote, "I kept sending, as did other COs [commanding officers], qualified women to try out for the WAC band. Regardless of their experience, whether they were private and public school music teachers, teaching and performing majors in college and graduate school, amateur and professional performers, no Negroes who auditioned were found to be qualified to play with the white band. For a race that was reputed to have the best sense of rhythm in the world, with exceptional dancing and singing skills, this constant failure seemed odd. We were slow to 'catch on,' but we eventually did. A few of us decided to organize our own Negro WAC Band."<sup>16</sup>

The condition for forming the band set by the Post Commander was that it had to play a concert in eight weeks. The director of the official WAC band, Master Sergeant Joan Lamb was instructed to help get the "all-Negro company" band established. Among the volunteers to join the band, only three had previously played an instrument, one was an opera singer, and several had sung in choirs and could read music, but many had no musical background at all. There were no instruments so Adams and Lamb ordered band equipment as "recreational



*Maude Crawford Blackwood as a teacher and in uniform. (Both pictures printed with permission of Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library)*

equipment."<sup>17</sup> Lamb collaborated with Sergeant Leonora Hull Brown who had two music degrees, including from Oberlin Conservatory, and was a music teacher and choir director. MSG Lamb also used ten volunteers from the white band to teach the women to read music while they waited for instruments to arrive. In a memoir after the war, Lamb assigned the instruments to the various band members and said she assigned "the French horn to Maude Blackwood because she had the attributes to play what Lamb regarded as "a cranky and difficult instrument," and, Lamb said, Blackwood performed beautifully."<sup>18</sup>

Practicing continuously, the band played its first concert for the Post commander, who was reportedly enraged that the band had succeeded in spite of the impossible timeline he had set for them.<sup>19</sup> From then on, the band played in parades and concerts, as well as performing as a swing band. Word



*Private Maude Crawford Blackwood at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Born Maude Clemence Crawford, she was the daughter of Daniel and Fannie Gray Mickens Crawford. She married in 1924 and having been divorced, married Thomas Lewis in 1947. This photo is from a scrapbook of the WAC Band found in the Duke University David M. Rubenstein Rare Books and Manuscripts Library.*



**Master Sergeant Joan A. Lamb**, director of the WAC band at Fort Des Moines, collaborated with SSG Leonora Brown to form the Black WAC Band. She brought ten volunteers to help with teaching music to the band members in its early days. MSG Lamb wrote of her experience after the war as one in which she received in personal growth and enrichment much more than she gave and one which had a great effect on her life. Her only wish was to convey to the band members "the respect, admiration, and love I felt for them." Staff Sergeant Leonora Hull Brown credited Lamb "as the moving force behind our being able to play music." (Source of photo: Women in Military Service for America Memorial)



**Staff Sergeant Leonora Hull Brown** had two music degrees, including from Oberlin Conservatory where she majored in piano and pipe organ, and Dillard University. She was a music teacher and choir director at South Carolina State University. She served as the conductor for the band. She also organized support for the band throughout the national African-American community. (Source of photo: Women in Military Service for America Memorial)

The band on parade. Staff Sergeant Lenora Hull Brown noted that originally the band "could not play difficult marches like the other band, but we could stick to a cadence of 120 so that the marchers did not have to run around corners at parades." With each performance, the band got better.



A group photo of the band. Although not labeled, Maude Blackwood is probably fourth from the right on the front row. This photo is from a scrapbook of the WAC Band found in the Duke University David M. Rubenstein Rare Books and Manuscripts Library.

of the first all-female Black military band spread, with distinguished visitors such as Marion Anderson and Mary McLeod Bethune traveling to Fort Des Moines to hear them. An early highlight for the band was playing in the parade for the opening of the 1944 NAACP annual convention in Chicago. Officially deactivated because the 2d WAC Band was an “unofficial” band, public pressure in support of the band, including appeals to the White House, forced the reactivation of the band as the 404th Army Service Forces WAC Band. Once reorganized, the 404th Band played numerous engagements until the end of the war, when it was finally disbanded. Born out of the Army’s ugly policies of segregation, the achievement of the 2d WAC Band is a stunning testament to the determination and persistence of the Black WACs at Fort Des Moines, including Staunton’s own Maude Crawford Blackwood, French horn player.

### **Mary L. Brent**

Lieutenant Mary L. Brent was commissioned in the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) in September 1942. A graduate of the Freedmen’s Hospital (later known as Howard University Hospital) School of Nursing in Washington, D.C., she was assigned to Station Hospital #1 at Fort Huachuca.<sup>20</sup> At the beginning of the war, the Army Nurse Corps did not accept Black nurses, despite thousands of applicants. Under pressure from the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, the ANC agreed to accept Black nurses, but placed a cap on the number they would accept, setting the number at fifty-six. Mary Brent, who had already been a nurse for fifteen years was among the fifty-six accepted.

The original Black nurses in the ANC were assigned to segregated hospital wards. Fort Huachuca with its large component of African American soldiers had the Army’s first African American hospital under the command of Dr. Midian Bousfield, who became the first Black person promoted to the rank of colonel in the Army Medical Corps.<sup>21</sup> By mid-July 1944, as the Army faced a severe nurse shortage and President Franklin Roosevelt contemplated drafting 18,000 nurses to alleviate the shortage, the ANC lifted the cap on African-American nurses and opened a basic training center for Black nurses at Fort Huachuca. By war’s end, there were close to 500 African-American nurses serving in the ANC, which represented just 0.8 percent of the Army’s nurse strength.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to serving in segregated medical facilities such as Fort Huachuca’s Station Hospital #1, African American nurses were also used at prisoner of war (POW) camps to care for German prisoners, an assignment that the Black nurses deeply resented. Having fought for decades to be accepted into the ANC, Black nurses were bitterly disappointed to be relegated to caring for enemy soldiers rather than wounded Americans.<sup>23</sup> After her



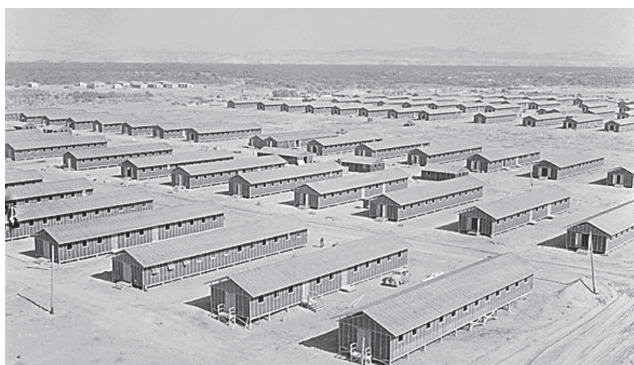


*Colonel Midian O. Bousfield with Captain Natalie Donaldson at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Bousfield commanded Station Hospital #1 at Fort Huachuca, which was the Army's first African American hospital and was Lieutenant Mary Brent's first duty assignment. Colonel Bousfield was the first Black officer to attain the rank of Colonel in the Army's Medical Corps. CPT Donaldson was in the first class of Black women officers (thirty-six were commissioned) and was commander of one of the two WAAC units assigned to Fort Huachuca. Stauntonians Helen Streibling, Helen Pannell, and Frances Howard either served under her command or would have been very familiar with her.*

assignment at Fort Huachuca, Lt. Mary Brent served at two of these POW camps, Camp Florence, Arizona, and Camp Rupert, Idaho. Fifty miles south of Phoenix, Arizona's Camp Florence was originally built to hold enemy alien internees and later was converted to a POW camp, housing up to 9,000 German soldiers. Encompassing a five-hundred-acre area with rows of barracks, a 486-bed hospital, bakery, athletics fields, and several theaters,<sup>24</sup> Camp Florence was one of the largest POW camps on American soil.<sup>25</sup> Originally housing Italian POWs, German prisoners were moved in shortly after Italy's surrender in September 1943. Lieutenant Mary Brent, along with other Black nurses at Fort Huachuca, was transferred to Camp Florence for the new prisoners. Later, she also served at Camp Rupert, Idaho,<sup>26</sup> which opened in 1943 and was closed after the fall harvest in 1946 because the POWs worked as farm laborers. Camp Rupert evolved into a disciplinary camp for those prisoners who had issues such as engaging in sit-down strikes or attempting to escape. By December 1945, the camp contained hundreds of Waffen SS. Lieutenant Brent was discharged from the Army Nurse Corps in February 1946, with nearly three-and-a-half years of service.<sup>27</sup>



*A surgery in the operating room of the segregated Station Hospital #1 at Fort Huachuca, where Lieutenant Mary Brent served, as photographed by Charles Steinmeyer for LIFE magazine.*



*The Prisoner of War barracks at Camp Florence, Arizona, which was Lieutenant Mary Brent's second assignment.*



*A group photo of the Camp Florence staff with ten African American nurses on the right. Mary Brent served at Camp Florence in 1944 prior to assignment at Camp Rupert, Idaho. (Photo provided by Pinal County Historical Society)*



## Mae Dell Henderson

As the war progressed, the United States developed a severe nursing shortage. In an attempt to address that shortage, Congress authorized in June 1943 the creation of the Cadet Nurse Corps. Under the program, nursing schools compressed the traditional thirty-six-month nursing program to thirty months and cadet nurses stepped in and filled shortages in hospitals created by the departure of experienced nurses to the armed forces. The legislation contained language that prohibited discrimination based upon race, color, or creed, opening the way for many Black candidates to enter the nursing profession and making the CNC the nation's first integrated uniformed service corps. Administered by the U.S. Public Health Service, the Cadet Nurse Corps was a uniformed service without military status. Although the Cadet Nurse Corps was disbanded in 1948, it fundamentally changed nursing education by implementing greater training standards and a more uniform curriculum across the nation.

Mae Dell Henderson of Christian, near Buffalo Gap, who was the 1941 valedictorian of Booker T. Washington High School,<sup>28</sup> had entered St. Philips

Budget Bureau No. 68-R145  
Approval expires August 31, 1945

Form 300 A  
FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY  
U. S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
DIVISION OF NURSE EDUCATION

SERIAL NO. 112157

NAME OF CADET NURSE *Henderson, Mae Dell*  
(PRINT OR TYPE)

SIGNATURE OF CADET NURSE *Mae Dell Henderson*

NAME OF SCHOOL *St. Philip Medical College*

CITY *Richmond*

STATE *Virginia*


DATE OF ADMISSION TO SCHOOL *Feb. 1, 1943*

DATE OF ADMISSION TO CORPS *July 1, 1943*

DATE OF ISSUANCE OF THIS CARD *May 17, 1944*

SIGNATURE OF DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL OF NURSING *E. Louise Grant*

DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

THIS SPACE FOR CENTRAL OFFICE USE	TERMINATION DATES		
	BY GRADUATION	WITH DEFAULT	WITHOUT DEFAULT
	<i>2/1/46</i>		

(4400) *22-08-5* 16-38249-1

St. Philip Medical College, Richmond, Va.



Mae Dell Henderson as a 1st Lieutenant, stationed at Valley Forge General Hospital in 1951. After completing the Cadet Nurse Corps training, she served five years with the Veterans Administration in Roanoke, Virginia. (Photo from the News Leader, April 27, 1951)

Mae Dell Henderson's Cadet Nurse Corps registration card showing that she entered the CNC on its first day.

Hospital nursing school in February 1943 and was placed into the program on the first day of the program's existence.<sup>29</sup> As a cadet nurse, Henderson received financial assistance with the federal government covering the costs of tuition, room and board, uniforms, and a monthly stipend in exchange for a commitment to serve the country as a nurse for the duration of the war. One of 120,000 women who went through the Cadet Nurse Corps, she was part of a program that helped to prevent the collapse of civilian nursing care.<sup>30</sup> After graduating from St. Philips, Mae Dell Henderson went on to serve five years with the Veterans Administration hospital in Roanoke, followed by further training at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas. In 1951, as a 1st Lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps, she was stationed at the Valley Forge General Hospital in Pennsylvania.<sup>31</sup>

These Staunton-Augusta African American women served honorably, overcoming oppressive racial attitudes and contributing to the breaking down of racial barriers that would lead to full integration in the armed services.

**Author's Note:** In the course of additional research, the author discovered another African American woman born in Staunton who served in the WAC, but about whom very little is known. **Helen Aurelia Miller Wilson** was born in Staunton in 1921, the daughter of Albert G. and Ethel Johnson Miller. By 1940, the family had moved to Pittsburgh, where Helen Miller worked with a Hill City crime prevention project. She enlisted in the WAAC on April 18, 1943, serving until her discharge as a Corporal on May 29, 1945. Having married in 1944, she served under the name of Helen Aurelia Wilson. Although the nature and location of her service is unknown, she was discharged at the Sioux City, Iowa Army Air Base, suggesting that she was also assigned to the Air WAC unit that Irene Carr and Helen Streibling served in, before they were selected for the 6888th.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>*The Daily Republican* (Monongahela, Pa.), 22 Feb 1938, 3. Her work with the Welfare League of Negro Women is mentioned in several issues of *The Daily Republican* and *The Daily Notes*, (Canonsburg, Pa.), 1938-1940.

<sup>2</sup>*Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 11 Sep 1942, 22.

<sup>3</sup>*Pittsburgh Courier* (Pittsburgh, Pa.) 12 Dec 1942, 9.

<sup>4</sup>Jefferson, Robert, BLACKPAST, "32ND AND 33RD WAACS HEADQUARTERS COMPANIES (WORLD WAR II)", Oct 25, 2008. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/32nd-and-33rd-waacs-headquarters-companies-world-war-ii/>.

<sup>5</sup>*The News Leader* (Staunton, Va.) 10 Oct 1942, 2.

<sup>6</sup>Jefferson, Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>*The Apache Sentinel* (Fort Huachuca) 17 September 1943, 6, and 3 December 1943, 7.

<sup>8</sup>*The News Leader* (Staunton, Va.) 12 Aug 1949, 5. *The News Leader*, "Frances H. Ware" obituary, 23 March 1981, 3.

<sup>9</sup>*Sioux City Journal* (Sioux City, Iowa) 23 April 1944, 19.

<sup>10</sup>Fargey, Kathleen, "6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion (Women's Army Corps)," U.S. Army Center of Military History, 14 February 2014. <https://history.army.mil/html/topics/afam/6888th-PBn/index.html>.

<sup>11</sup>*Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 11 Nov 1965, 29.

<sup>12</sup>Fargey.

<sup>13</sup>Warrington, Beth A., "New monument honors all-female, African-American battalion," Army University Press, February 4, 2019. [https://www.army.mil/article/216907/new\\_monument\\_honors\\_all\\_female\\_african\\_american\\_battalion?fbclid=IwAR0eh1p0riynZW--LBN9xna6tzgI3jcZ4ymo-6JBqXOOaJSDbgbtjeVBrJl](https://www.army.mil/article/216907/new_monument_honors_all_female_african_american_battalion?fbclid=IwAR0eh1p0riynZW--LBN9xna6tzgI3jcZ4ymo-6JBqXOOaJSDbgbtjeVBrJl).

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>Ancestry.com. New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

<sup>15a</sup>This band is referred to as either the 1st Negro WAC Band, the 2d WAC Band, or the 404th Army Service Forces WAC Band in various sources.

<sup>16</sup>Adams, Charity, *One Woman's Army*, Texas A&M University Press, 1989, quoted by Jill M. Sullivan in *Bands of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands During World War II* Scarecrow Press, 2011, 29-30.

<sup>17</sup>Hagen, Carrie, "Seventy-Five Years Ago, the Military's Only All-Black Female Band Battled the War Department and Won," *Smithsonian Magazine*, March 28, 2019. [www.smithsonianmag.com/history/seventy-five-years-ago-militarys-only-all-black-female-band-won-victory-against-war-department-180971815/](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/seventy-five-years-ago-militarys-only-all-black-female-band-won-victory-against-war-department-180971815/).

<sup>18</sup>Putney, Martha S. "The Women's Army Corps' Black Band: A Historical Note," *Army History*, Fall 1994, No. 32 (Fall 1994), U.S. Army Center of Military History, 8.

<sup>19</sup>Hagen, *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>*The News Leader*, 10 Oct 1942, 7.

<sup>21</sup>Vanhouten, Matt, "Midian Othello Bousfield (1885-1948)" Black Past, January 12, 2011. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/bousfield-midian-othello-1885-1948/>.

<sup>22</sup>National Women's History Museum, "African American Nurses in World War II," July 8, 2019. <https://www.womenshistory.org/articles/african-american-nurses-world-war-ii>.

<sup>23</sup>Clark, Alexis, "The Army's First Black Nurses Were Relegated to Caring for Nazi Prisoners of War," *SMITHSONIANMAG.COM*, May 15, 2018.

<sup>24</sup>Jack Hamann, *Rewriting History in 'American Soil'* <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4659346>.

<sup>25</sup>*Echoes of the Southwest*, Florence: POW Camp, July 28, 2011 <http://www.echoesofthesouthwest.com/2011/07/florence-pow-camp.html>.

<sup>26</sup>Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA) Memorial Register.

<sup>27</sup>Ancestry.com. U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011..

<sup>28</sup>*The News Leader*, 2 June 1941, 1.

<sup>29</sup>Ancestry.com. U.S., World War II Cadet Nursing Corps Card Files, 1942-1948 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

<sup>30</sup>Washington State Nurses Association, "The Push to Recognize the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps as Veterans." By Ruth Schubert, Nov 27, 2019.

<https://www.wsna.org/news/2019/the-push-to-recognize-the-u-s-cadet-nurse-corps-as-veterans>.

<sup>31</sup>*The News Leader*, 27 April 1951, 8.

# Saving the 'Middlebrook Waltz'

By Nancy Sorrells

**Editor's Note:** *In April of 2021, the Augusta County History Society opened "Music & Miniatures of Note in the Valley" in the History Gallery of the R.R. Smith Center for History and Art. The exhibit featured the whimsical pairing of the region's musical story with miniature scenes from the Valley's past. The inspiration behind the musical portion of the display was the husband and wife duo of Don DePoy and Martha Hills, known as Me & Martha. Keeping Shenandoah Valley mountain music and other regional musical traditions alive is their goal.*

*The exhibit featured many of their instruments as well as interpretive signage about the many musical traditions of the Valley. Musical items from the Society's collections were also on display. Interspersed among the musical history of the Valley were five miniature dioramas crafted by Greenville's Gary Whistleman. The miniature scenes in area history featured Native American history, the blacksmith forge of Ned Tarr (the first African American landowner west of the Blue Ridge), a distilling scene, and one featuring "The Burning" – the 1864 devastation that the Union army visited upon the agricultural and industrial economy of the Valley.*

*The exhibit closed late in the summer of 2021. One of the interpretive panels in the music portion of the exhibit featured the story of the "Middlebrook Waltz." That information is preserved in this article.*

If not for a chance encounter at a cakewalk, the sweet, lilting tune known as the "Middlebrook Waltz" would have been lost to history. There is a cast of characters involved in the saving of this short tune starting with the song's composer, Millard Fillmore Fix (1855-1934).

We do not know much about Fix, beyond that he was from the Middlebrook area where he is variously listed in the census as a farm laborer, a house painter, and a gardener. Fix was apparently also a musician who probably played the fiddle. He is the man given credit for writing the "Middlebrook Waltz." Fix died in 1934, but not before passing the tune along to the next generation of local musicians.

One of those "next generation" musicians was Marvin McCray (1919-1999) who lived most of his life in the Middlebrook and Walkers Creek area on the Rockbridge-Augusta County line. McCray was a fiddle player and, in the early 1990s, he was the last living person to know the "Middlebrook Waltz" . . . until the cakewalk fundraiser for the Walkers Creek Ruritans.

There was another family in the Middlebrook area that loved old-



*George Jarvis picks out a tune on one of his handmade guitars. The musician and craftsman not only made a variety of stringed instruments, but he made miniature instruments to be worn as jewelry (see inset). This photo was taken in 1995.*

time music. Occasionally George Jarvis (guitar), his wife Pauline (who sang) and their son J.C. (fiddle) would show up and make music at area cakewalks. George (1932-1999) knew how to make music, literally, as he was known not just for his playing, but also for the beautiful banjos, dulcimers, and guitars that he crafted out of a variety of woods. After making an instrument, he took the leftover wood scraps and made miniature stringed instruments that were jewelry pins.

The Jarvis family members were friends with Middlebrook resident Roberta Hamlin who played the autoharp and the dulcimer. One night, the Jarvis family was scheduled to play at a Walkers Creek cakewalk. Just before the event, word arrived that the elderly Marvin McCray would also be at the cakewalk, so George and Roberta took their cassette tape recorders to the event to record Marvin playing the "Middlebrook Waltz." Despite the fact that he had suffered a stroke, Marvin was able to play the tune and pass down the story about the composer Millard Fillmore Fix, whom he said was buried in the Middlebrook graveyard. The burial ground, located just a few doors down from where Roberta lives in the village's old brick tavern, was once the cemetery to a Union Church that is no longer standing.

Roberta took her recording to a dulcimer workshop at the Augusta



Heritage Center at Davis and Elkins College in West Virginia where the instructor, Tull Glazner, helped her work it up for the dulcimer. Feeling like the “Middlebrook Waltz” should be preserved, Roberta and her friend Nancy Sorrells took the cassette recording to Middlebrook folk musicians Robin and Linda Williams in 2001.

The musical duo took the waltz, which has no words, and placed it



*Roberta Hamlin stands beside the gravestone of Millard Fillmore Fix, the man who started this story by composing the “Middlebrook Waltz,” probably in the late nineteenth century.*



*Robin & Linda Williams, the Middlebrook folk musicians who helped save “The Middlebrook Waltz” by recording it, play some music in the Middlebrook Public Library.*



The final step in ensuring that the song would not once again nearly disappear from history came in 2021 when musician Richard Adams created sheet music and a digital recording for the waltz. It has taken nearly thirty years, but thanks to a cakewalk, and a handful of dedicated folks, the “Middlebrook Waltz” has earned a never-to-be-forgotten spot in the musical history of Augusta County.

Millard Fillmore Fix

The image displays a musical score for two violin parts, Violin I and Violin II, for the piece 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The music is in common time (C). The Violin I part is marked with a '3' and the Violin II part with a '6', indicating the number of strings used. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27, and 30 marked at the beginning of their respective staves. The notes are primarily eighth and quarter notes, with some measures containing rests. The key signature and time signature are consistent throughout the visible portion of the score.

*Sheet music of the "Middlebrook Waltz" produced by Richard Adams.*

# The Baby in the Basket

By Donna Huffer

***Editor's Note:** In the 2004 issue of the Augusta Historical Bulletin Pastor Jo Ann Snapp had an article detailing the search for her father's ancestry titled, "An Unknown White Waif." Fast forward a decade and a half and Society Archivist Donna Huffer has combined the science of DNA with her genealogical skills to begin to solve the mystery of the orphan boy in a basket.*

On December 9, 1901, a woman trudged up North Augusta Street from the railroad station carrying a heavy basket. She had gotten off the Chesapeake and Ohio train No. 3 from Washington, D.C., a little after 4 a.m. in the morning. Reportedly, she told Officer John Fretwell that "I know where I want to go," when he told her the train would not return to Washington, D.C., for another six hours. It was a cold winter day and she disappeared up the street carrying her load. No one saw her return, supposing that she left on the 10:15 train back to Washington.

She deposited the basket that contained a healthy white baby about four weeks old on the porch of a resident miller, Thomas Smith Gisiner, who lived at 207 N. Augusta Street. "Smith" Gisiner was a married man with six children. When questioned, he claimed to know nothing about the baby or the woman. One report from the newspaper said Gisiner found the child on his porch. Another report stated the baby was found by a passing drayman who heard the baby's cries and alerted the local police. Other reports claimed the baby was found by other people on other porches. Rumors were rampant.

The baby was wrapped securely in warm clothes and a blanket. William M. Simpson, the chief of police, gave the baby to a Mrs. S. C. Smith, mother-in-law of Fireman Sutton, to care for until the matter was settled.

Attempts were made to find the woman carrying the basket. Unfortunately, she had disappeared. A conductor was noted as saying that the woman had told him she was not the mother of the child but only delivering the baby for a friend. No one had a clear description of the woman or a name to report to the police. The next day, a man down the street and a relative by marriage to Smith Gisiner, filed a petition to adopt the boy. This man, Eugene Davis Snapp, had just lost an infant son



*In the photo at left, Miller Snapp, standing on the right, poses with a childhood friend who was probably a cadet at Staunton Military Academy. The photo at right is Florence and Eugene Snapp sitting on the back steps of their Staunton home.*

eighteen months before and he and his second wife Florence were eager to adopt the infant. The court gave the boy to the Snapps a few weeks after his arrival and the couple named him Miller Dunbar Snapp.

Miller grew to adulthood in Staunton, went off to World War I, and married. He had one daughter, Jo Ann Snapp. When he and his wife divorced, Jo Ann went to live with her mother and her mother's parents. She became a minister and after she retired, began doing research on the Snapp family, the family from which at the time she believed she was descended. A Snapp historian, however, told her Miller was adopted. It was the first she had heard of it. Her father had never known he was adopted and her grandmother Florence Snapp never mentioned it. Now Jo Ann had another mission. She wanted to know who her real grandparents were.

She began her search the usual way by checking out the records in Staunton and Augusta County, gathering the newspaper reports, and obtaining a copy of the adoption papers from 1901. There were no further clues leading to the identity of the mystery woman who left the baby in the basket on the porch December 9, 1901.

It was time for theories. What was the connection of the woman to Smith Gisiner? Jo Ann learned that Gisiner had been sued by a Julia Shultz in 1879 for breach of promise in Staunton Court. He had secretly married another woman in Rockingham County that was expecting a baby while still engaged to Shultz. She received \$640 for her humiliation. Could this Gisiner also be the father of the baby in the basket? Why else would a woman deliberately leave a baby on his porch? Soon after this incident, the Gisiners moved to Baltimore. Smith Gisiner disappeared forever, his wife claiming to be married in 1910 but a widow in 1920. He seems to have deserted the family or died somewhere not in Augusta County.

Jo Ann contacted the Augusta County Historical Society and I was brought in to suggest some way to solve this case. There is only one way, I told her. DNA is one hundred percent accurate if you could get a match. Jo Ann had already done her DNA on Ancestry but had not followed through with putting up a tree or allowing the company to publish the matches. She made me manager of her account and we got down to business.

Jo Ann's DNA was based on her mother's side. I became acquainted with her mother's line to weed out those possibilities. In her case, this was easy because all her mother's relatives were from Grayson County, Virginia. I was only looking in the second and third generations where her grandparents would be.

Right away I noticed something odd. Four Augusta County lines popped up. These were known people who lived in the Verona area. Jo Ann was related closely to the children of James Leitch and Cynthia Depriest. I had already researched the Depriest family so I knew a lot about them. They were farmers. Cynthia was the daughter of War of 1812 veteran and shoemaker, Robert Depriest. Her brothers had all fought for the Confederacy as well as her husband. After the Civil War, their finances, like almost everyone else's in Augusta County, were depleted. They were barely surviving after the war.

James Leitch and Cynthia had eight children, their youngest daughter being Celestine Leitch born about 1879. James died in 1893 and Cynthia died in 1897, leaving Celestine to find her own way in the world. There was no inheritance she could fall back on. She went to work as a servant.

Jo Ann's DNA indicated several links to a Julius Leitch, father unknown. Julius appeared on the 1900 census as the infant son of Celestine Leitch who was a servant in the household of Thomas and Anna Moses. Anna Moses was later known as the famous folk artist Grandma Moses.

Now it was starting to make sense. There was no doubt that Celestine was the mother of Julius and the baby in the basket. But who was the father? Gisinier was still in the running but not a single link showed up on the DNA. I further investigated Celestine's life.

Celestine Leitch, I learned, was living in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1907 as a servant. Julius Leitch, however, was placed in the St. John's Orphanage in Washington, D.C., by 1910. There is no evidence that Celestine ever returned to collect him. Instead, she moved on to marry carpenter Albert Kutsch in New Jersey in 1910. She had two children by her husband and died in Bergen, New Jersey, in 1971.

Julius, the brother of the baby in the basket, went on to live in New York City. He served in World War I, married Elizabeth Phillips, and worked as a mechanic for the post office. He died in 1953, probably completely unaware that he had a brother in Staunton, Virginia, and a mother not far away in New Jersey.

At this point, I still didn't know who the father was of Miller Snapp and Julius Leitch. I waited, checking for more matches to come in. Then finally up popped the one I was looking for. Jo Ann was closely related to a Walter Moses of Vermont. This Walter turned out to be the brother of Thomas Moses, husband of Grandma Moses who lived in Augusta County for eighteen years. Two other matches surfaced linking Jo Ann to the two children of Thomas Moses.



*The Moses family in the front yard of the Dudley farm in northern Augusta County, circa 1898. Seated in the middle is probably Celestine Leitch who is probably pregnant with her son, Julius.*





*Miller Snapp, left, Thomas and Anna Moses, middle and right.*

"Well," I thought, "that was never mentioned in the biography of Grandma Moses!" How else could we be certain? Jo Ann sent a picture of her father. I found a picture of Thomas Moses who had very distinctive eyes. Miller Snapp and Thomas Moses could be twins! Miller's half-sisters (legal children of Thomas Moses) also had those same distinctive eyes. Nancy Sorrells dug up a picture of the Moses family at the Dudley Farm in Augusta County. In the center sat a young very pregnant woman believed to be Celestine Leitch.

So now, Jo Ann had her real family tree. Other people weren't happy about it, of course. There were questions that could never be answered. Whose children did Anna (Grandma) Moses think Celestine was having at her house at the same time she herself was burying her own stillborn children? Did she really not know? Did she ask Celestine to leave?

There were other coincidences to consider also. Eugene Snapp and Florence attended Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Staunton. Thomas Moses and family attended Emmanuel Episcopal Chapel in Verona. The chapel was an outpost of the Staunton church. Did Snapp know the Moses family or Celestine Leitch? Did he finance her move to Washington, D.C., by 1901 in the hopes of obtaining a child to replace the one he had lost? Did she promise to bring the baby to him after the birth?

At the time of the delivery, Eugene and Florence lived on East Main Street. The woman could have placed the baby on the porch of Eugene Snapp directly if she had turned down Beverley Street. Instead, she went to Gisiner's house. His uncle was married to a related Snapp. Smith Gisiner was also a well-known miller. He knew a lot of people through



*Emmanuel Episcopal Chapel in Verona, seen here in 1952.*

his work. He may also have visited the mill in Verona very near where the Moses family lived. He may have been the middle man in the deal.

Eugene Snapp knew immediately about the arrival of the baby in the basket. He filed a petition for adoption in the Staunton court the very next day. It was as if he had been prepared to act as soon as the baby arrived. The other eleven petitioners took days to file the papers.

We may never know the answers to any of these questions. But Jo Ann now knows who her grandparents were, scandalous as it may be.

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# History of the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport

(From initial planning up through 1993)

By Dr. A. Erskine Sproul

Transcribed from his handwritten document by  
David Sproul, October 2021.

***Editor's Note:** Dr. A. Erskine Sproul was a physician in Staunton specializing in obstetrics and pathology. In 1953, the civic-minded Dr. Sproul was appointed to a group charged with finding a site for what eventually became the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport in Weyers Cave in northern Augusta County. Later he would chair the Shenandoah Valley Airport Commission for twenty-one years (1971-1993). He was inducted into the Virginia Aeronautical Historical Society's Hall of Fame for his contributions to the state's aviation history. Dr. Sproul passed away in July of 2010 at the age of ninety-three. In 2021, his son, David Sproul, discovered among his father's papers, a handwritten history of the airport that started with the initial efforts to create a regional airport and continued until about 1988. David Sproul painstakingly transcribed the manuscript and has allowed the Society to publish it, along with a number of family photographs, in this year's Bulletin. As readers will see in this fascinating glimpse of local aviation history from nearly seventy years ago, the well-established and thriving regional airport that we all know today encountered a rocky beginning. Thanks to the late Dr. Sproul for recording these memories and to the Sproul family for sharing them with us.*

In 1953, word came that the city of Staunton had sold its municipal airport at Verona to the Westinghouse Corporation to build an air conditioning plant. Wilson Dozier was president of the Staunton-West Augusta Chamber of Commerce at the time, and he appointed a committee to look for possible sites for a new airport. That committee consisted of Sydney Trott, chairman John Herndon, and Erskine Sproul.

About the same time, it became known that Col. C. C. Loth was selling his "Valley Airport" north of Waynesboro to the General Electric Company for a similar purpose. Immediately the possibility was raised that a larger Staunton-Waynesboro airport could be developed.



*Jake Smith (center in the dark suit) and his friends and colleagues stand in front of his Aero Commander. Standing from left to right are: unknown, John Deane, Jake, H. L. Houff, Cletus Houff and Frank Switzer. Cletus Houff was probably Jake Smith's corporate pilot. (Sproul family)*

The Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport was in the final stages of construction and the engineer for that project, O. Robbins Randolph, had put out feelers to see if a similar project could be promoted in the Valley. Accordingly, Herndon and Sproul called on Randolph and discussed with him how to proceed.

Randolph graciously offered to make a topographical map survey of possible sites, free of charge. The first site he picked out was at Barren Ridge, on Route 254, exactly seven miles from Staunton and seven miles from Waynesboro. Inspection on the ground showed that this site could be developed quite easily. Grading would be minimal and approaches from both directions were clear and unobstructed. This seemed an ideal location.

The committee then called on Col. Loth, hoping to enlist his cooperation and influence for the project. However, he was adamantly opposed to the whole idea. It was even suggested to him that he and his pilot, Harold Faber, could be given the first option to lease and operate the new field, but he remained intractable, and a rather vocal group emerged in Waynesboro that undertook to defeat the whole idea.

About the same time, it became known that Mr. R. R. "Jake" Smith had initiated talks with people from Harrisonburg about the possibilities

*Jake Smith boarding  
a Beechcraft King Air  
N123ST. The date of  
the photograph is not  
known. (Sproul family)*



of a joint Staunton-Harrisonburg Airport. It seemed prudent, then, for the Chamber of Commerce group to join forces with Jake's group and work toward a truly regional airport. The Harrisonburg people were enthusiastic and wanted to move ahead, and the Staunton city council was willing to commit funds.

Rockingham County came onboard, but Augusta County held out for three years before making a commitment. The word from the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) was that Rockingham County could not participate in a project in Augusta County unless Augusta County was also a partner.

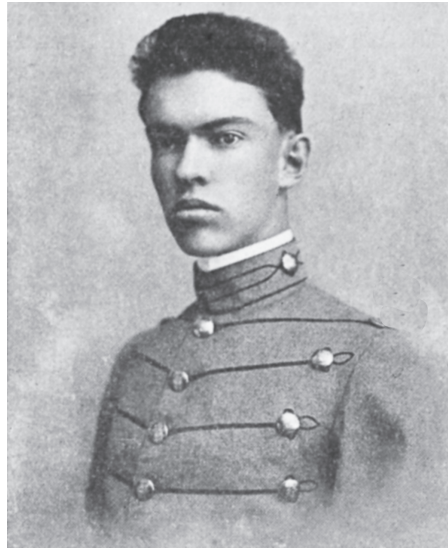
Jake Smith hosted a series of dinner meetings for various groups of community leaders to generate support for the project, and members of the Chamber of Commerce group spoke at every civic club and public hearing where they could manage to find invitations. A public hearing sponsored by the Augusta County Board of Supervisors in May of 1955 was particularly hair raising. Opposition was vitriolic.

Staunton City Council led the way by pledging \$10,000 to the project. Harrisonburg pledged \$25,000 and Rockingham County agreed to put up \$20,000. This was still far short of the local funds needed. The CAA indicated it would furnish fifty percent of the cost of the project and the State Corporation Commission, Division of Aeronautics, would put up twenty-five percent.

Rather than accept defeat, the Staunton Chamber of Commerce Airport Committee, which by then had been expanded to about thirty



city and county leaders, decided to launch a public subscription campaign. To everyone's surprise, they raised \$65,000 in pledges. The Waynesboro Chamber of Commerce also conducted a capital campaign and raised some \$20,000, even though the city council was actively opposing the project. The Harrisonburg Chamber also raised about \$20,000.



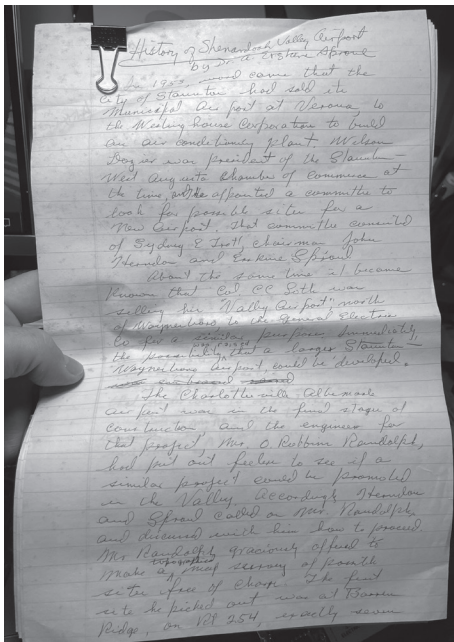
Fearing that further procrastination would cause the federal government to withdraw its support, the Staunton City Council appropriated \$70,000 to get the project off the ground. Randolph was employed to design the airport and prepare the grant application.

*Orlando Robbins Randolph designed the Charlottesville airport and then was tapped to design the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport. (Sproul family)*

Virginia Senator George M. Cochran from Staunton introduced legislation in the General Assembly creating the Shenandoah Valley Joint Airport Commission as a political subdivision to be composed of one representative each from the cities of Staunton and Harrisonburg, and the counties of Rockingham and Augusta, the latter having reluctantly agreed to join and contribute \$20,000.

In the interim, the Barren Ridge site had been abandoned, due to local opposition and the refusal of Waynesboro to participate. Several other sites more centrally located were considered, but again local opposition caused them to be abandoned. Finally, it was possible to get options on a farm between Weyers Cave and Mount Meridian, off state route 256. This became the site of the airport.

At this point, even though the Airport Commission had been designated a political subdivision in its own right, its continuity was questioned by the CAA, and it had no credit history. The CAA insisted that one of the governing bodies must be the official sponsor and fiscal intermediary. Again, the Staunton City Council agreed to accept this responsibility, which included grant applications and acceptances, and to receive and distribute state and federal funds. Thus, the airport became



*Dr. Sproul's handwritten airport history, left, was transcribed by his son, David, in 2021. In the 1937 photo at right, a young Dr. Sproul is piloting a Piper J3 from the rear as former Staunton resident Phil Shultz takes the photo from the front of the plane. (Sproul family)*

deeply identified in federal documents as “the Staunton airport,” to the great dismay of supporters in Harrisonburg and, especially, Waynesboro.

After three years of wrangling, cajoling, and begging, sufficient funds were committed or in hand for the Airport Commission to buy the land and sign contracts for construction of the facility. Waynesboro City Council joined the group about the time construction was started and action by the legislature added Waynesboro’s name to the official list of sponsors of the airport.

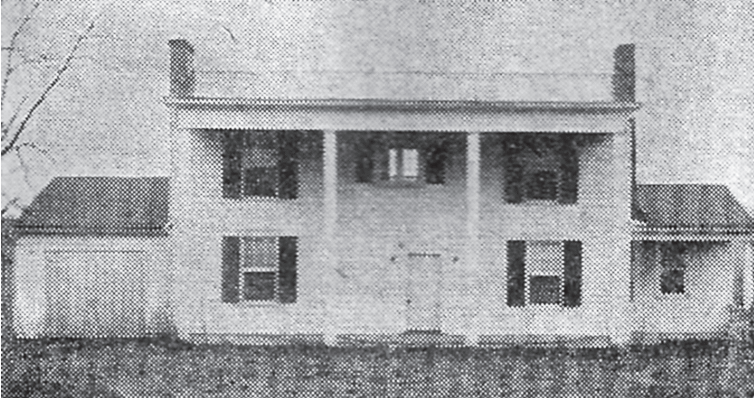
Construction of the airfield proper was completed in the summer of 1958, and the facility declared opened for aeronautical activity as the Shenandoah Regional Airport (SHD). However, there were insufficient funds for an airline terminal, so a white frame farmhouse was moved about a half mile, and the interior remodeled to provide space for an airline office as well as an office for the airport manager. This makeshift structure remained in use until the first phase of the permanent airline terminal was built in 1969.

However, there was still no commitment for airline service. Delegations went to Washington to persuade Senators Harry F. Byrd and



*Dr. Sproul's sons have fond memories of going out with their father to the airport construction site. (Sproul family)*





*The former Walter Craig farmhouse, located where the new airport was constructed, was moved several hundred feet from its original location in a nearby field and served as the first airport terminal at the new airport. This top photo was part of a February 2, 1957, article in the newspaper about the construction of the airport. The bottom photo is from the Sproul family.*







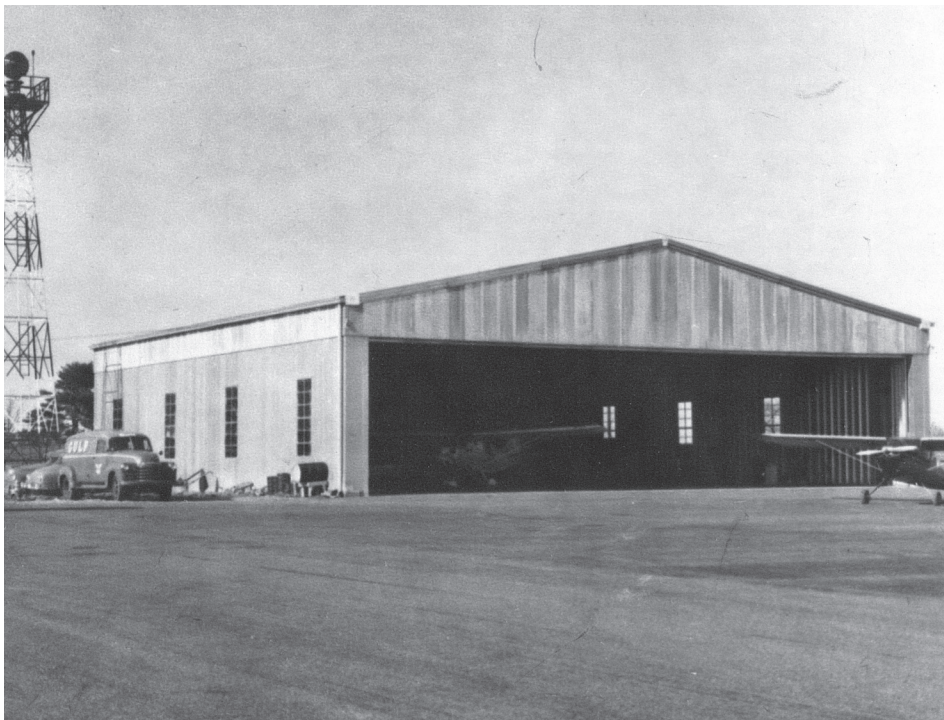
*Construction photo taken by Dr. Sproul. (Sproul family)*

A. Willis Robertson to intervene on our behalf with the Civil Aeronautics Board to certify an airline to serve the airport. Negotiations had been proceeding with Piedmont Airlines officials for several years, but Piedmont had begun service to Charlottesville and saw no advantage to having another stop so close by. After all, they were attracting a number of Valley travelers to Charlottesville (CHO) already; however, they had not been able to get certified to serve the Washington (DCA) market, which they wanted badly.

By combining SHD's petition for service with CHO's for the route to DCA, Piedmont was persuaded to get behind the applications and service was authorized to Washington from both communities. Airline service with DC-3 piston powered aircraft began on February 1, 1960. There was much fanfare, including a fly-in by broadcast personality Arthur Godfrey.

By 1962, utilization of the airport was steadily increasing, both by corporate aircraft and the airline. The original 4,000-foot runway had been adequate for the DC-3 aircraft, but Piedmont was replacing the DC-3s with twenty-nine-passenger Fokker F-27 turbine powered aircraft and forty-passenger piston Martin 404s. On hot days, the F-27 had to reduce its payload by nine passengers and the Martin 404 by eighteen passengers. This, of course, was unacceptable to the airline and great pressure was being put on the Commission to extend the runway.

By this time, even those who had vigorously opposed the airport project could now see the economic benefit to the community. In May 1962, Jake Smith convened another of his famous dinner meetings for the members of the governing bodies of the five airport sponsors. Support

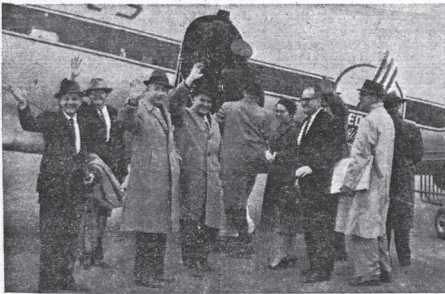


*The 1958 hangar. (SHD files)*



*The first airport layout with the first terminal at the left of the photograph. (SHD files)*





FIRST SCHEDULED FLIGHT by Piedmont Airlines to Washington this morning took this bevy of distinguished guests pictured at the left from Staunton — E. Lewis Knowles of The Leader Publishing Co. and the C of C; Charles P. Blackley of radio station WTON; Thomas E. Hussett Jr., vice-mayor; Harold L. Grogan, manager, Chamber of Commerce; from Harrisonburg — Frank C. Switzer, mayor and secretary of the Shenandoah Valley Airport Commission; F. Larrick Zirkle, chairman, Rockingham County Board of Super-



visors; Walter F. Green, Green-Auto Parts and former mayor; Adrian L. Sonn, of Joseph Ney's department store; from Waynesboro — W. W. Stone, Waynesboro newspaperman; C. Benton Colner, Chamber of Commerce airport committee; Francis L. Loth, executive secretary, Chamber of Commerce; Charles T. Yancey, city manager. At the right are a group of distinguished guests who were aboard the Piedmont plane which provided courtesy flights prior to the airport dedication Sunday. (Staff Photos by Sutton and Topping)

*The first scheduled flight on February 1, 1960. (SHD files)*

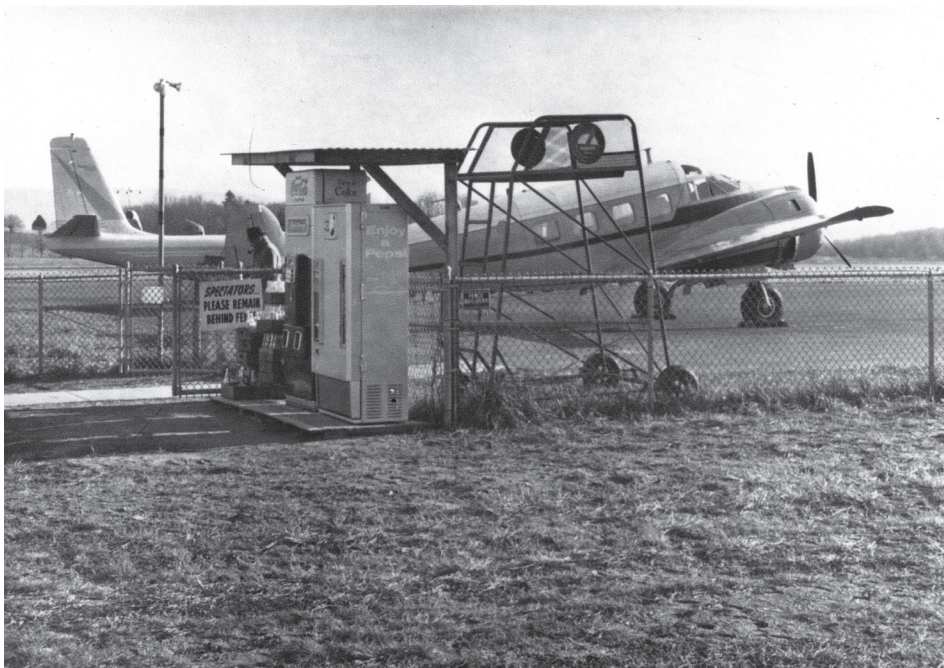
was immediately forthcoming for \$150,000 expansion program. This time the cost was apportioned among the sponsors, based on the full real estate assessment of the five localities.

Under the plan, the Harrisonburg share was \$8,075, Staunton's \$10,925, Waynesboro's \$9,975, Augusta County's \$9,500, and Rockingham's \$9,025. The project was underway in a short time and included a 1,000-foot lengthening of the runway, substantial increases in paved ramp area, and relocation of part of Route 256 around the north end of the runway.

All was well for the next six years, when talk of Boeing 737 jet service emerged. Another extension of the runway was thought to be mandatory. During 1968-69, the runway was lengthened to 6,000 feet and widened to 150 feet. More ramp area was paved and the runway lights upgraded. The runway twenty-two approach "localizer" beam was installed as the final part of a full Instrument Landing System (ILS). The white frame house, which had been conscripted as an airline terminal, was moved back across the road and rehabilitated as a dwelling, and a new brick main terminal was completed.

In early 1969, Jake Smith resigned as Staunton's representative and as chairman of the Commission, positions he had held since the inception of the Commission in 1954. Smith's broad knowledge of business and of governmental affairs, along with his unwavering dedication surely qualified him to be regarded as "The Father of the Airport." Succeeding him as chairman was Frank C. Switzer, a former mayor of Harrisonburg. He was one of the most vigorous supporters of the airport in the early





*An aircraft at the new airport. (SHD files)*



*Piedmont Airlines in 1972. (SHD files)*

days, and the last of the original commissioners. He occupied the chairmanship for only a short time, but continued to be a valued member of the Commission for several more years.

Judge Desmond C. Wray was appointed to succeed Smith as Staunton's representative, and became chair when Switzer resigned that position. During Judge Wray's administration, a master plan study was commissioned. O. Robbins Randolph of Charlottesville, the engineer who designed the airport, was in declining health. The Commission selected the Dewberry, Nealon, and Davis firm to perform the study.

In August of 1971, Judge Wray resigned from the Commission, due to the press of personal business. Dr. A. Erskine Sproul was appointed to represent Staunton. The following January he became chairman of the Commission and remained in that role for the next twenty-one years.

In early 1972, the master plan was completed and presented to the Commission. It proposed an eighteen-year development, divided into three phases. Phase 1 was termed a "catch-up" phase and was to run through 1975. Phase II occupied the next five years, to 1980, and Phase III was to be completed by 1990. The price tag was estimated at \$5.5 million. The cost was daunting to the Commission in view of the amount of persuasion needed to bring the airport into existence. Also, the sponsoring governing bodies were not happy with the idea of no requests for funds for five years or so, and then an urgent request for large sums.

With all of these things in mind, the Commission again called for a dinner meeting with representatives of all sponsors. The engineers presented the plan in detail. Representatives from the FAA, the Virginia Division of Aeronautics, and the local Chamber of Commerce were included.

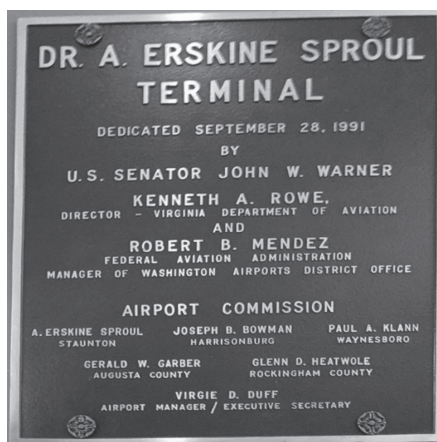
The plan was well received by all present. The Commission then proposed that, rather than requesting large sums every few years, that each sponsor put \$25,000 for development and operations of the airport in each year's budget and the Commission would develop the priorities and timing of the necessary projects to conform to that level of spending. These yearly appropriations would continue until the master plan had been completed.

Furthermore, if all appropriated funds were not required for the projects in any given year, the residue would be retained by the Commission for use in subsequent years when the project at hand exceeded the annual appropriations. This arrangement proved to be the

key to success of the plan, for as some have been fond of saying: "This airport was built largely out of 'fall-out'" money." What this meant was that SHD was a very low priority for federal funds that were available, and funds were not committed during the allocation period. However, large airports with a higher priority sometimes, for various reasons, were not able to utilize the money allocated to them during the fiscal year. When that happened, each year on September 15, the FAA would call and say the airport could have X dollars for such and such a project if we could get it under grant by October 1, the start of the next U.S. federal government's fiscal year.

If we had the plans ready and the local share of the cost in the bank, we had a project. The sponsoring governing bodies graciously accepted this method of doing business, to the great benefit of all concerned. The Commission recognized that any given city council or board of supervisors could not commit its successors to the funding as above, but all five recognized the value of what was being done, and went along in subsequent years, making the annual appropriations.

The Commission in return kept to its side of the bargain in not asking for greater funding, except for one project in 1989. This included enlargement of the airline terminal, revision of the parking lot, and development of county water and sewer facilities. For that project, it was necessary to ask for larger funding for the next two years, but the importance of the project was such that all governing bodies agreed.



*On September 28, 1991, the \$2.7 million upgrade of the airport was dedicated in a ceremony led by U.S. Senator John Warner and Dr. Sproul, chair of the airport commission. In order to recognize the long and dedicated work that Sproul had put into the airport, the new terminal was named in his honor.*



# Airport terminal dedicated

By DAVID BOTKINS  
Staff Writer

**WEYERS CAVE**—Hundreds of people gathered at Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport Saturday morning for a huge celebration and dedication of the multi-million-dollar terminal renovation here.

Clear, crisp weather made Valley Airfest 1991 a perfect day for skydivers, Coors Light Silver Bullet Jet performance and the bands that played throughout the morning and afternoon.

The festival-like event marked the opening of the \$2.7-million terminal, expanded parking, new access road,

expansion of the airline apron and connection to the Augusta County water and sewer system.

The airport opened Sept. 28, 1958 at a cost of \$650,000. The facility was dedicated Jan. 31, 1960, with airline service beginning Feb. 1, 1960. Piedmont Airlines provided the service.

USAir took people in plane rides, tours were given of the terminal and the Coors Light Silver Bullet Jet piloted by Eliot Cross entertained the crowd.

The Coors jet, built with aluminum equivalent to 11,672 cans of Coors Light Beer, was the highlight of the day. Flying at a speed of 300 mph, it reached an altitude of almost 2,500 feet during the air show.

The plane is fully transportable and can be dismantled in 20 minutes. The jet fits through a 5-foot doorway and is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's smallest man-carrying jet aircraft. It is only 12 feet long and less than 4 feet high at the cockpit.

Cross narrated his performance from the cockpit for the audience to hear.

Dozens of VIPs, politicians and political want-to-be's gathered for the 11 a.m. dedication ceremonies led by U.S. Sen. John W. Warner, R-Va., and Dr. A. Erskine Sproul, chairman of the airport commission. Members and candidates for the Board of Supervisors, House of Del-

egates and state Senate were all on hand.

Other speakers included Joseph B. Bowman, secretary/treasurer of the airport commission; Robert B. Mendez of the Federal Aviation Commission; Kenneth A. Rowe of the Virginia Department of Aviation; and Del. A.R. Giesen Jr., R-Waynesboro.

There were more than 15 contributing sponsors of the event. The six organizers were ADOM Inc., the airport commission, Staunton Department of Economic Development and the three Chambers of Commerce located in Staunton, Waynesboro and Harrisonburg.

*Sept. 28, 1991*



**DEDICATION**—U.S. Sen. John W. Warner, R-Va., presents Dr. A. Erskine Sproul, chairman of the Shenandoah Valley Airport Commission,

a U.S. flag that flew over the Capitol. It will fly at the renovated multi-million-dollar terminal which was dedicated Saturday.

*September 28, 1991, newspaper article about the dedication of the Dr. A. Erskine Sproul Terminal.*



*Dr. Sproul flying the Goodyear blimp in 1980 as part of the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Smith's Transfer. (Sproul family)*



# 'Taking the cars' at Staunton: The Civil War experiences of George Washington Hall

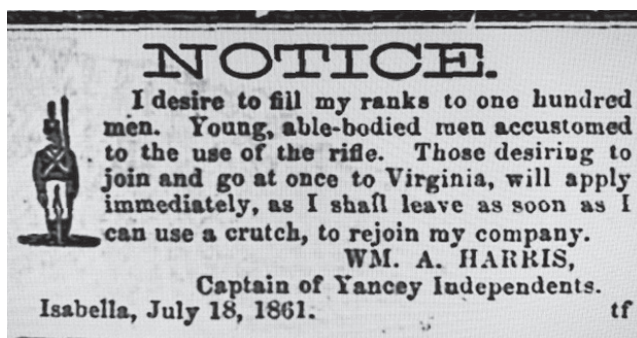
By Mary T. Hall

***Editor's Note:** Mary T. Hall is a retired U.S. Navy Commander. When she's not editing nineteenth century diary entries, she teaches political science and military history at St. Mary's College of Maryland. She has a B.A. in history from Columbus College (now Columbus State University), an M.A. in military history from Norwich University, a J.D. from the University of Georgia, and an LL.M. from The Judge Advocate General's School of the Army, Charlottesville, Va. Professor Hall would like to thank ACHS member Bill Miller for his information on Civil War hospitals in Staunton and Arlene Nicely of the Staunton Military Academy Alumni Foundation, Inc., for her information on SMA.*

Likely no other town or city played as pivotal a role during the Civil War in the life of my great-grandfather, Private George Washington Hall, 14th Georgia Infantry, as did Staunton, Virginia. Hall's Civil War diaries, which I am editing for publication, reveal the life-saving – and life-changing – interactions he had with the town between 1861 and 1864.

Hall grew up in Alabama and Georgia, enlisting at the age of nineteen, in May 1861, in the Yancey Independents, a Worth County volunteer unit that would become Company G, 14th Georgia Infantry. His regiment served almost the entire war in Virginia, initially with the Army of the Northwest and later with the Army of Northern Virginia. Hall saw combat in the Peninsula Campaign, and at Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania, where he was captured on May 12, 1864. Spending nine months as a prisoner of war (POW) at Fort Delaware, Delaware, he was not exchanged until a month before the war ended.

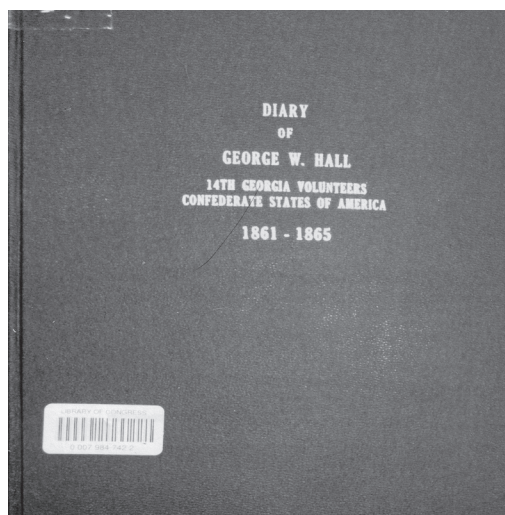
Hall, who began keeping a diary in the spring of 1862, filled two small, leather volumes over the course of the war. The first volume was just a pocket journal, which he began using in April 1862 with a retrospective to his decision to enlist in May 1861. The other volume was a commercially-published 1862 “*Remembrancer*” that had initially belonged to Private Jacob L. Elsesser of the 9th Pennsylvania Reserves. Elsesser, who had been his town's justice of the peace before the war, had left his



*Newspaper recruiting advertisement from Hall's hometown. By this date, he had already enlisted, but the ad succeeded in adding men to Hall's company.*

diary at the camp that his regiment hastily abandoned after the Battle of Mechanicsville. Hall picked up Elsesser's diary and as he wrote on June 27, 1862, he was turning it "from a Yankee to a Rebel diary." Other than a gap while he was hospitalized in late 1862, he wrote almost daily after acquiring Elsesser's *Remembrancer*.

When Hall died in 1912, his pocket journal and the *Remembrancer* were passed down to his eldest son, Willis Hall, a pioneer of Miami, Florida (and the developer of the Hall avocado). Hall's granddaughter Mary Leta McGregor Thayer borrowed the diaries in the late 1920s and typed the contents of the diaries into a manuscript. She later had her manuscript bound and provided copies to the Library of Congress and the University of Georgia. Included in her bound manuscript were not only three years of Hall entries, but also six months of Elsesser's entries from 1862. Thayer also included a certificate of Elsesser's service, which she had requested from the Pennsylvania Adjutant General's Office. Thayer, who was concerned about the fading ink in the diaries, later declared that typing the manuscript



*In the late 1920s, Hall's granddaughter transcribed and typed up the contents of Hall's Civil War diary. Today the bound manuscript, seen here, can be found in the Library of Congress and the University of Georgia.*



1881 engraving of George W. Hall.

“seemed like one way she could contribute to the history of our country.” Indeed, given that the diaries themselves were likely accidentally discarded by one of Willis Hall’s children, the two soldiers’ Civil War entries would have been lost to history but for Thayer’s manuscript.

At numerous points in the war, Hall traveled in and out of Staunton on foot, by wagon, and by rail. Not only was Staunton located near the southern end of the Valley Turnpike, it was also the southeastern terminus of the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike; as such, it was the military gateway to what was then regarded as northwest Virginia. Moreover, the town provided a major railroad station on the Virginia Central Railroad, connecting the southern Valley, and its agricultural riches, to Richmond. Hall referred to riding the railroad as “taking the cars.” As soon as the 14th Georgia was accepted into Confederate service at Lynchburg in July 1861, it was assigned to the Army of the Northwest, then headquartered in Monterey. To reach Monterey, the 14th Georgia rode in box cars on the Virginia Central from Lynchburg to Staunton on July 31, 1861, and then marched to Monterey in Highland County on the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike.

Hall and the 14th Georgia did not linger long in either Staunton or Monterey. The regiment left Monterey on foot on August 3, bound for Huntersville, in Pocahontas County, now West Virginia. The march westward from Monterey took the regiment over terrain that Hall described as “some of the highest mountains in the Southern Confederacy;” he marveled that he saw clouds below him. Despite the region’s natural beauty, surviving fourteen weeks in western Virginia proved to be one of the greatest challenges of the war for the 14th Georgia. Even though they never fired a shot in combat (despite participating in Robert E. Lee’s failed Cheat Mountain campaign), the men from southwest Georgia incurred more casualties here than at any other point in the four years of war. Two-thirds of the regiment, including Hall, became ill from a wide range of diseases such as typhoid, mumps, measles, and gastrointestinal ailments. Factors such as poor medical care, inadequate shelter, and insufficient clothing and supplies exacerbated environmental factors



*The Staunton that Hall observed would have looked much like this 1857 image of the city created by German artist Edward Beyer. (Library of Congress)*

such as unusually heavy rains and cold autumnal temperatures. Hall's Company G of roughly one hundred men lost over twenty men to death and at least another half-dozen to discharge and resignations. Hall himself was severely ill during this period but remained in his tent rather than being moved to one of the multiple hospitals, at locations such as Warm Springs and Rock Alum Springs, that filled with men from the Army of Northwest Virginia.

Hall took the cars back through Staunton in November 1861 en route to Manassas Junction after the regiment was reassigned to Joseph Johnston's Department of Northern Virginia. After wintering over in Prince William County, the 14th Georgia moved south to help halt McClellan on the Peninsula, fighting at Fair Oaks, Mechanicsville, Gaines' Mill, and Frayser's Farm. However, living conditions in the swampy environment of the Peninsula took its toll on Hall's health and shortly after reassignment to Jackson's corps near Gordonsville in central Virginia, he was hospitalized for the first time, in Nelson County, for two weeks in August 1862. Traveling mostly by foot (and often barefoot), it took almost a month for Hall to rejoin his regiment in late September, just above Martinsburg, now in West Virginia.

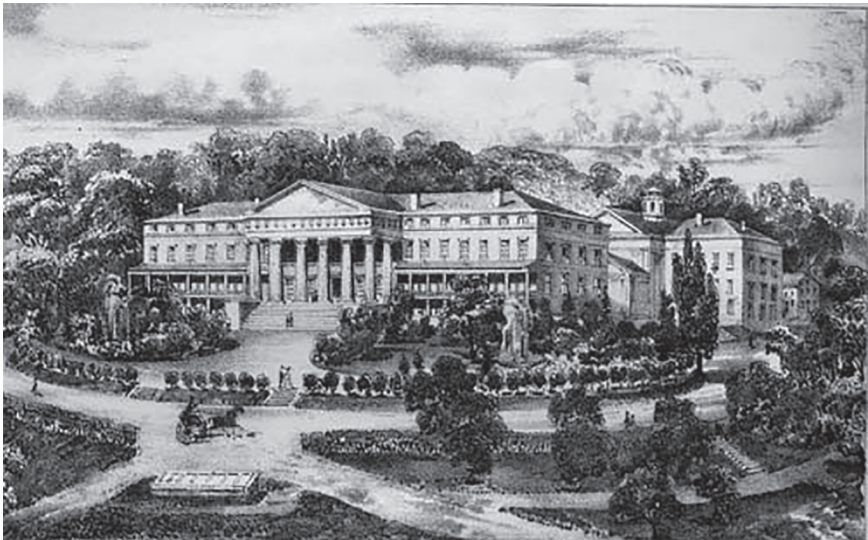
Private Hall took ill again on October 8, 1862, with a "verry bad cold and a Severe cough" which pained him "verry much" in his head and throat. He developed a fever on October 10 and his cold worsened into pneumonia. Hospitalized in Winchester from late October through November 16, 1862, he was transported by ambulance to Staunton, arriving on November 19 or 20. It was a difficult journey; Hall wrote that he had nowhere to lie at night in the cold except "on the floor of some old



out house and some time on the bare ground with only one blanket to lie and cover with." By this point his illness had developed into bronchitis, but the worst was yet to come.

Early in the war, the Virginia Institution for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind in Staunton had been converted into a General Hospital that already had 500 patients by August 1861. At one point it filled to 1,300 before the wounded, who were transported to Staunton from locations throughout the Shenandoah Valley and as far away as Richmond, were placed in individual homes and in tents in the groves above the rail depot. Hall appreciated the medical care he received at Staunton, writing that he was "well cared for" and that thanks to "good medical attention," he "soon began to recover" in late November. But as Hall wrote in his diary, "on the 4th of Dec I taken the Small Pox, which was raging with terror in Staunton at this time."

Smallpox, also known as the "speckled monster," was one of the most lethal diseases of the war, causing death in up to one third of its victims. A smallpox epidemic had erupted in Virginia in October 1862 and did not reach its peak until early 1863. Both the Union and Confederate armies attempted to inoculate its soldiers against smallpox



*The Confederacy's General Hospital in Staunton was actually the Virginia Institution for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind, founded in 1839. The school returned to its intended purpose after the war and continues today as the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind. The main campus building, seen here in this nineteenth-century image, is now on the National Register of Historic Places.*

through a gruesome process where infected scabs were harvested for material that was administered through small cuts into the patient's skin. Cattle scabs were preferred but if none were available, then human scabs were used; indeed, sometimes children were vaccinated at multiple locations on their arms so their scabs could be harvested. Hall had been vaccinated in February 1862 while he was stationed in northern Virginia, but he still contracted smallpox ten months later. On December 5, 1862, he was transferred from the general hospital in Staunton to the smallpox hospital, which apparently consisted of tents pitched near a pond that no one was allowed to approach any closer than one hundred yards.

Hall was laid "verry low for 18 or 20 days" but had begun to regain his strength and appetite when he developed erysipelas, a painful tissue-eating contagious bacterial infection, in his foot and leg around Christmas. He was moved from the smallpox hospital back to the general hospital on January 19, 1863. Although he continued to have multiple health issues, he was well enough to commence nursing duties on March 1, 1863. Eager to return to his comrades, he departed the hospital for his regiment, taking the cars at Staunton to Guinea Station, where his regiment was encamped southeast of Fredericksburg, on March 13, 1863.

Hall returned to Staunton nine months later. In the fall of 1863, the 14th Georgia, like most of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, was still recovering from the brutality of the Chancellorsville and Gettysburg campaigns. The regiment had just settled into "verry warm shanties" near Orange Court House in central Virginia when Thomas's brigade received short notice to march on December 15, 1863. Lee had temporarily detached the brigade to the command of Major General Jubal Early, whom Lee had tasked to deal with pesky Union General William Averell, whose cavalrymen were wreaking havoc raiding the Valley. Averell appeared to be heading south to Salem, a major station on the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad that the 14th Georgia had passed through in July 1861 en route to Lynchburg. On the night of December 15, 1863, Thomas's Brigade, which consisted of the 14th, 35th, 45th, and 49th Georgia infantry regiments, took the cars on the Alexandria and Orange Railroad to Gordonsville, where they changed trains and then rode on uncomfortably crowded Central Virginia Railroad cars through Charlottesville and Staunton to Buffalo Gap. The Central Virginia cars were so overloaded that some men were forced to ride in open cars.

Joseph Waddell, a prominent citizen of Staunton, noted in his journal

on December 15 and December 16, 1863, that trainloads of soldiers had been arriving in Staunton; he surmised that the troops passing through “must be intended to cut off the retreat” of Union soldiers who had destroyed the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad in Salem, but none of the officers he spoke with had any knowledge of where they were headed. Waddell added that “it was distressing to see many of our poor fellows who had just arrived, without blankets and overcoats. As a mass they were dirty, ragged and badly clad, but lively as usual, extracting fun from everything.”

Early had been too late to intercept Averell prior to the raid on Salem. In the span of only six hours at Salem on December 16, 1863, Union forces cut the telegraph wires, demolished a water station and turntable, set fire to the depot and several bridges, tore up rail track, and destroyed supplies. Early hoped to intercept Averell on the Union cavalryman’s return north. All four of Thomas’ regiments rode the rail cars from Buffalo Gap back to Staunton, where the 14th Georgia and 45th Georgia disembarked and the 35th Georgia and 49th Georgia rode west to Millboro in nearby Bath County. The 14th Georgia spent a cold night outdoors in a bitter wind in Staunton before finding some old houses for shelter. On December 19, 1863, the 14th Georgia and 45th Georgia rejoined the other two regiments at Millboro, which the men of the 14th Georgia had last seen as they were winding up the disastrous western Virginia campaign two years earlier. Early failed to intercept Averell, however, due in part to poor weather that slowed Early’s infantry and Averell’s unexpected decision to take a westerly route up a portion of the Huntersville-Huttonsville Pike in West Virginia.

Having just missed Averell, Thomas’ brigade rode by rail from Millboro back to Staunton on December 20, 1863. However, their stay in Staunton lasted less than a day. When news came that another Union force was raiding Harrisonburg, the brigade marched over thirty-five miles north from Staunton in a bitter, driving winter wind, only to find the Union troops exiting Harrisonburg just as Thomas’s troops arrived. The regiment then marched nine miles to camp at New Market. Hall wrote that by the time they got to camp, he could barely put one foot in front of the other.

Hall spent Christmas encamped at New Market, where he attended Sunday worship, likely at Smith Creek Baptist Church, on December 27, 1863. The next several weeks were spent in incessant marching up and down the Valley in bitter winter conditions, often in deep snow. Thomas advised Early that “a great many” of his men lacked shoes, which made marching an even greater discomfort due to near-zero degree weather

that Hall noted was the coldest the area had experienced in five years. Nor was there adequate shelter from the winter elements; Hall had no tent and had to sleep in the open. The hardiness of Thomas's men in the harsh temperatures and often heavy snows impressed Early, who observed how well Thomas's men, despite being from Georgia, endured the heavy shows and harsh temperatures.

But some days were harder than others: on January 9, the regiment began a march past New Market and Harrisonburg to a camp near Staunton, an exhausting march of over seventy miles in four days that resulted in two-thirds of the brigade falling sick or becoming exhausted. As Hall wrote on January 12, 1864, "We lay in the snow every night and marched . . . through it all day." He grew ill again in mid-January 1864 and although Hall was distressed that he missed a Sunday church service, his illness did not stop him from marching again the next day.

Hall and the remainder of Thomas' Brigade departed Taylor Springs on January 27, 1864, to join Early for an expedition into West Virginia. Early planned to lead a raiding party on Moorefield and Petersburg, the site of Fort Mulligan, a Union garrison. It was a brutal mountain march with Hall noting that they crossed the same creek "20 or 30 times." The brigade's eighty-mile march, through the pass at Orkney Springs into Lost River Valley, put them in Moorefield, within eight miles of Petersburg, on January 30. While at Moorefield, Early learned that a Union supply train was approaching Petersburg on the following day, so he dispatched his cavalrymen, under Brigadier General Thomas L. Rosser, to capture the train. Rosser's men overwhelmed a large number of Union defenders in seizing the wagon train, which netted the Confederates over fifty intact wagons of supplies.

Early planned an assault on Fort Mulligan for February 1. After Thomas's Brigade reached Moorefield, it split, with the 49th Georgia taking the road directly to Petersburg while Hall's 14th Georgia and the remainder of the brigade marching through fog along an old mountain trail covered in underbrush. However, the Union troops at Fort Mulligan had learned from a captured prisoner that Early was at Moorefield and planned to attack Petersburg the next morning. As Hall described the Union response, they "smelled a mouse" and evacuated Fort Mulligan, taking most of their stores with them. According to one soldier in the 35th Georgia, some of the Union soldiers even left behind their wives as they were in "a big hurry to get off." However, Early's men celebrated



Rosser's capture of the fifty wagons of commissary supplies, which included bacon, sugar, and coffee.

After Thomas's Brigade destroyed portions of the Fort Mulligan magazines and shelters, they returned to Moorefield on February 1, while Early sent Rosser to cut the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad near Patterson Creek and to collect livestock. On February 4, Early's force began its march back to the Shenandoah Valley. Rosser's livestock raid had been a success, and as Early later wrote, the abundance of provisions, the "luxury of a little coffee taken from the enemy; and the kind hospitality of the people of Moorefield and the vicinity rendered this winter campaign into the mountains a most pleasant episode" for his men. The 14th Georgia was the advance guard of Early's column on the march back to the Valley, which put them in the enviable position of walking in front of 1,200 cattle and 500 sheep, rather than behind them, as the other regiments were forced to do. Hall recalled the view of the Valley from his mountain-top vantage point:

As we descend the last range of mountains between us and the Shenandoah valley the most beautiful view I ever saw presents its self to us. The wide extensive valley dotted over with a hundred towns and villages. The broad fields and beautiful farm houses extending away from Winchester to Staunton, brings vivid to my memory happier scenes of by gone days.

After camping near Mount Jackson and at New Market, the regiment returned to its camp at Taylor Springs on February 7, 1864. Hall moved to a new camp less than a week later. He described the weather during his time there as "the coldest and most disagreeable" he had ever experienced in his life, likely due in large part to being forced to sleep without a tent on the north side of a mountain.

The 14th Georgia returned to Orange Court House at the start of March 1864, but Hall did not accompany them; instead, he was in Florida. On February 22, he drew a furlough and waited impatiently until February 26 for it to be processed so he could depart. Furloughs were used throughout the war, usually to provide a soldier time to recover following a hospitalization. Commanders often begrudged granting furloughs on humanitarian grounds, both because of the ensuing loss of manpower and a general fear that soldiers permitted to return home might not return to their units. Later in the war, furloughs were expanded as a means of rewarding merit and discouraging desertion, but they were issued in very low numbers.

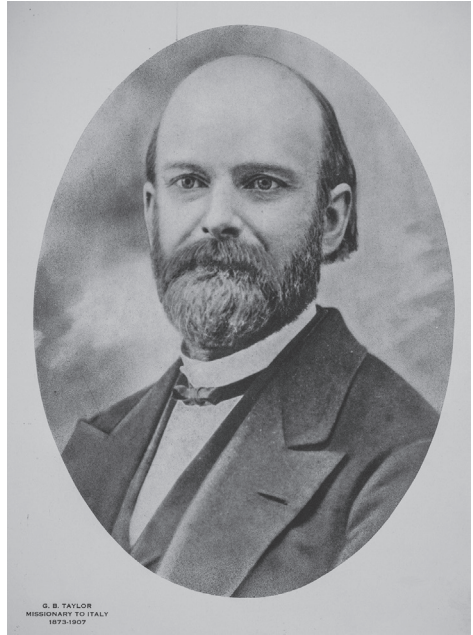
Most furloughs for non-medical reasons were of thirty days' duration but soldiers attempting to travel from Virginia to homes in the deep South often encountered transportation issues that cut into their time at home.

Hall's family had moved from Worth County, Georgia, to Liberty County, Florida, after the war began. It took Hall over a week to make the journey to Florida, beginning with a blister-inducing twenty-five-mile walk to Staunton, where he received his transportation documents and "took the cars" to Richmond on the morning of February 27. Enduring the 1864 equivalent of "planes, trains, and automobiles," Hall returned home by rail, steamboat, and stagecoach. While on furlough, he attended church services in nearby Wakulla County, where he met Amanda M. E. Mobley, whom he would marry shortly after the end of the war.

When Hall returned to his regiment from furlough in late March 1864, he had no way of knowing that his spring campaigning would end with his being taken prisoner at Spotsylvania on May 12, 1864. After being captured and spending roughly two days at Belle Plains, in Stafford County, Virginia, he was transported by ship to Fort Delaware, arriving at Pea Patch Island on May 20, 1864. He remained at Fort Delaware until paroled on March 7, 1865, when he was returned to Confederate lines at Richmond. After receiving a sixty-day post-release furlough, George Washington Hall headed home to Florida, arriving there on March 28, 1865, less than two weeks before the remaining members of his company, numbering fewer than two dozen, surrendered at Appomattox. As Thayer wrote, Hall "went in a foot-soldier, and came out one, barefooted."

Hall would not have witnessed the end of the war if the general hospital at Staunton had not brought him through major life-threatening illnesses. But the hospital did more than provide medical treatment: it also provided the framework for a spiritual conversion of such power that it molded the next five decades of Hall's life. Although the diaries show the occasional reference to God prior to January 1863, the tone of the entries changed dramatically while Hall was in the general hospital at Staunton. After surviving bronchitis, pneumonia, smallpox, and erysipelas in the span of only a few months, it's little wonder that Hall turned to religion shortly after leaving the smallpox hospital. An entry on Sunday, January 25, 1863, is the first of over a hundred entries over the next twenty-seven months in which Hall wrote supplications to God, memorialized attendance at worship events, or otherwise referenced his Christian faith.

Not surprisingly, hospitals provided fertile ground for conversions. Major hospitals had their own chaplains, who not only conducted religious services but also provided spiritual counseling and distributed Bibles and religious tracts. The post chaplain at Staunton, Reverend George Boardman Taylor, D.D., maintained that early in the war it was difficult to get soldiers to listen to preaching; if they attended services at all, they were often distracted, smoked, or walked about. But as the war progressed, men listened in earnest and more solemnly. Hospitalization provided men the time to engage in worship, reflect on mortality, and to read spiritual material that “colporteurs” would distribute. Although colporteurs would on occasion charge for religious tracts, such material was usually free for hospital patients.



*George Boardman Taylor*

George Boardman Taylor was a Richmond native and a graduate of Richmond College and the University of Virginia. Following in his prominent father’s footsteps, he entered the ministry, first serving as pastor of a Baptist church in Baltimore before accepting, in 1857, a pastorate in Staunton at what is now First Baptist Church. The Baptists arrived in Staunton long after other major Protestant denominations had taken root; as Taylor’s son wrote in 1908, “Staunton in these early days was a difficult field for the Baptists, though now one hears no longer the old saying that Baptists and sweet potatoes will not grow west of the Blue Ridge.” Once the war erupted, Staunton quickly became a rendezvous point for southern troops, which prompted Taylor to volunteer to serve as a chaplain. However, the local home guard, Company B of the Staunton Militia, had a different plan for Taylor. In July 1861 they elected him captain. Captain Taylor provided both uniforms and drill for his troops but resigned in September 1861. He later saw active service as regimental chaplain for the 25th Virginia Infantry from June through October 1, 1862. Taylor was a

dedicated correspondent whose letters to his family provided insight into the experiences of both a regimental chaplain and a post chaplain.

One of Taylor's most impactful accomplishments as post chaplain was establishing two large libraries for soldiers in Staunton. Some funding came from the Baptist Sunday School and Publication Board. Local citizens donated two or three bushels of books in response to Taylor's request for small Bibles and New Testaments for soldiers. Hall appears to have taken enthusiastic advantage of the libraries. In early February 1863, he wrote that his mind was "calm and serene and resting on the love of God" and that he had the opportunity while hospitalized to read "good books." The first book Hall mentions reading was Richard Baxter's *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650). On February 26, he wrote that he was reading John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), hoping "by the blessings of the Lord I will gain good instruction from it." On March 9 and 10, he listed without explanation the titles of over ten Christianity-themed books, including collections of famous sermons; given that he expected to leave for his regiment soon, it is likely that Hall listed those titles as books he hoped to read in the future. Hall later reread *Pilgrim's Progress* – ironically, a book written by a former prisoner about a protagonist who is himself imprisoned – during his time as a POW at Fort Delaware. Hall's interest in the book is almost certainly attributable to Reverend Taylor, who wrote his brother in 1862 that he had "lately been led to much heart-searching by *Pilgrim's Progress*."

Taylor's father, Reverend James B. Taylor, Sr., also visited soldiers in the hospital at Staunton; he later wrote that these visits could be "peculiarly touching." As the senior Taylor relayed, "One man from Southwestern Georgia told me, with deep feeling, that out of 98 composing his company 24 were buried in Western Virginia." Although Taylor did not name the soldier, it might very well have been Hall, who was from southwestern Georgia and had lost over twenty-one of his company in western Virginia in the disastrous campaign there in 1861.

Hall's faith was his stalwart in the battles and ordeals that followed. He actively participated in the revivals on the Rappahannock in the spring of 1863; indeed, one of the most powerful revivals during this period was in Thomas's Georgia Brigade. Hall was baptized by immersion in the Rappahannock River by a regimental chaplain on April 12, 1863, just weeks before the battle of Chancellorsville where the 14th Georgia held the far left of the Confederate line at Bullock Road. Both in camp and at





*George Washington Hall, seated with his Bible many years after the Civil War.*

Fort Delaware, he gravitated to other prisoners of strong Christian faith, read religious books, and, when possible, attended prayer meetings and listened to preaching.

Hall ended his diary with a supplication that he would be permitted to spread God's glory and speak God's name on the house tops. He had written in 1863 what he saw as his life's mission: "I wish it to be the work of my life to be an instrument in Spreading the glory of God and to bring glory to his kingdom by influencing others to walk the narrow path that leads to eternal life." He remained true to that goal by becoming a preacher soon after the war ended. Licensed and ordained in 1867, Hall served as a Baptist minister and missionary for over forty years, preaching at countless

churches in Florida and Georgia. For many years he was a circuit rider, traveling across north Florida by horseback or horse-and-buggy, and often gone from home for long stretches of time. He established the children's Sunday school program in Florida and was an early supporter of Deland (now Stetson) University. Using the pen name "Uncle Hall," he wrote a popular column in the *Florida Baptist Witness* newspaper in the mid-1880s, providing children with "spiritual advice, personal encouragement, and promotional help to all his spiritual nieces and nephews."

In 1881 the *Christian Index* published *The History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia*, which contained short biographies of prominent ministers. Among those featured with biographies were George Broadman Taylor and Hall's two regimental chaplains. A biography of George Washington Hall, then a youthful thirty-nine years old, was included as well. This was a singular honor for a farm boy who had enlisted at nineteen and who never had a single day of divinity school or service as a military chaplain.

All told, Staunton figured prominently in three chapters of Hall's war, with each chapter revealing a facet of Staunton's importance in the war as a transportation hub, a medical center, and a strategic asset for the Confederacy. Hall appreciated the Valley for its beauty and its people as "the kindest and most benevolent of any place I have ever known." Judging from the complimentary tone he used in the diaries when referring to the region, it would not be unreasonable to think that his children grew up hearing glowing stories about Staunton and the Shenandoah Valley. And those stories may have played a role in the decision of Hall's son Robert E. Hall to send his only son, Robert E. Hall, Jr., to Staunton Military Academy a generation later.



Robert E. Hall, Jr. as an SMA cadet.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Stanton left a very favorable impression on one member of the 14th Georgia who wrote to a newspaper that the town "contains a highly intelligent, refined and enterprising population of about four thousand. Quite a number of literary institutions are here among the principal of which are four female schools, under the direction of the Episcopal, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches." "Dixie," *Special Correspondence from Col. Brumby's (14th) Regiment*, 16 Nov 1861," *Southern Confederacy* (Atlanta, Ga), Nov. 24, 1861, 2.
- <sup>2</sup>Robert H. Moore II, *Gibraltar of the Shenandoah: Civil War Sites and Stories of Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County, Virginia* (Virginia Beach, Va.: Donning, 2004).
- <sup>3</sup>Charles Culbertson, *The Staunton, Virginia Anthology* (Staunton, Va.: Clarion Publishing, 2013), 104-107.
- <sup>4</sup>Joseph Waddell, who kept a journal of life in Staunton during the war, noted on November 12, 1863, that there were "[a] number of small-pox cases," which prompted him to get re-vaccinated. According to Waddell, those who died from smallpox were buried at a separate cemetery. Diary of Joseph Addison Waddell, University of Virginia Library, <https://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/AD1500>
- <sup>5</sup>Thomas G. Cropley, "Dermatology and Skin Disease in the American Civil War," *Dermatology Nursing*, no. 1 (February 2008), 32.
- <sup>6</sup>Bell, Wiley L., *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 254. The worst epidemic in the Confederate Army occurred in the Army of Northern Virginia, shortly after the Antietam campaign in the fall of 1862. H. H. Cunningham, *Doctors in Gray: The Confederate Medical Service* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 196. Of the cases treated in general hospitals in Virginia between October 1862 and January 1864, there was a forty percent death rate. *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup>Terry Reimer, "Smallpox and Vaccination in the Civil War," posted November 9, 2004; accessed July 10, 2020, [https://www.civilwarmed.org/surgeons-call/small\\_pox/](https://www.civilwarmed.org/surgeons-call/small_pox/) Reimer was a former Director of Research at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, Frederick, Md.
- <sup>8</sup>Samuel M. Quincy, *History of the Second Massachusetts Regiment of Infantry: A Prisoner's Diary* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1882), 18.
- <sup>9</sup>Stanley B. Burns, "Civil War Disease and Wound Infection," PBS Learning Media Background Essay, accessed July 10, 2020, <https://mpt.pbslearningmedia.org>.
- <sup>10</sup>Culbertson, *The Staunton, Virginia Anthology*, 104-107.
- <sup>11</sup>Waddell, Augusta County: Diary, <https://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/AD1500>.
- <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup>Mark A. Snell, *West Virginia in the Civil War: Mountaineers Are Always Free* (Charleston, W.Va.: History Press, 2011), 117; Robert N. Thompson, "William Averell's Cavalry Raid on the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad," *America's Civil War* (November 2000), accessed July 24, 2020 at <https://www.historynet.com/william-averells-cavalry-raid-on-the-virginia-tennessee-railroad.htm>.
- <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup>John J. Fox, III, *Red Clay to Richmond: Trail of the 35th Georgia Infantry Regiment, C.S.A.* (Winchester, Va.: Angle Valley Press, 2006), 221.
- <sup>16</sup>"The men had no tents and their only shelter consisted of rude open sheds made of split wood, yet, though Thomas's was a Georgia brigade, they stood the weather remarkably well and seemed to take a pleasure in the expedition, regretting when the time came to fall back." *Jubal A. Early, Memoirs: Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War Between the States* (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1994), 333.
- <sup>17</sup>Fox, *Red Clay to Richmond*, 229.
- <sup>18</sup>Early, *Memoirs*, 337.
- <sup>19</sup>J. Wm. Jones, *Christ in the Camp: Religion in Lee's Army* (Richmond, VA: B. F. Johnson & Co., 1887), 187.
- <sup>20</sup>Wiley, *Life of Johnny Reb*, 179.
- <sup>21</sup>George Braxton Taylor, *Life and Letters of Rev. George Boardman Taylor, D.D.* (Lynchburg, Va.: J. P. Bell, 1908), 41.
- <sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 66.
- <sup>23</sup>Michael L. Bineham, "Role of the Southern Baptist Chaplains and Missionaries in the Civil War," Master's Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2003, 33; [Samuel Boykin], *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia with Biographical Compendium and Portrait Gallery of Baptist Ministers and Other Georgia Baptists* (Atlanta, Ga.: Jas. P. Harrison, 1881), 519 (Biographical Sketches); H. Rondel Rumburg, *George Boardman Taylor: Chaplain-Pastor-Missionary* (Appomattox, Va.: SBSS, 2019), 67. Taylor's resignation may have been prompted by an injury he incurred to his knee.
- <sup>24</sup>Rumburg, *George Boardman Taylor*, 69; Jones, *Christ in the Camp*, 27.
- <sup>25</sup>Taylor, 68-69. George Boardman Taylor also wrote *The Soldier's Almanac for 1863*, a pamphlet contain-

ing monthly calendars and pages of spiritual commentary. Scans of the almanac pages are available at the University of North Carolina's Documenting the American South website at <https://docsouth.unc.edu/imps/almanac1863/menu.html>.

<sup>26</sup>William W. Bennett, *The Great Revival* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1877). Although there was no specific date provided for this visit, Taylor did refer elsewhere in the letter to Stonewall Jackson in present tense, which suggests the letter was written prior to Jackson's death in May 1863.

<sup>27</sup>Jones, *Christ in the Camp*, 306.

<sup>28</sup>G. W. Hall entry, Biographies H, <https://floridabaptisthistory.org/2020/11/23/biographies-h/>

<sup>29</sup>Rev. Taylor left Staunton in 1869 to take up a short residency as chaplain at the University of Virginia. He returned to Staunton in 1871 and remained until 1873, when he and his family moved to Italy, where he served many years as Superintendent of Baptist Missions in Italy.

<sup>30</sup>*The History* described Rev. Hall as a "a good preacher" who used "excellent language" and as a "prudent, calm, self-possessed man . . . Few men of like opportunities have been more useful; few, under similar circumstances, have had their labors more blessed." Boykin, *History of the Baptist Denomination*, 242.

<sup>31</sup>Robert E. Hall, Jr., who was born in Miami, Fla., attended SMA between 1926 and 1928. A *Miami Herald* article from November 1, 1931, stated that Hall was "an ex-Staunton Military Academy gradster." My father's time at Staunton likely influenced his decision to join the Florida National Guard in 1930 when he was only seventeen. Some forty-two year later, he retired as a colonel in the regular Army, having served during WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.



# The Defense of Staunton: Battle of Piedmont June 1864

By Hugh B. Sproul III

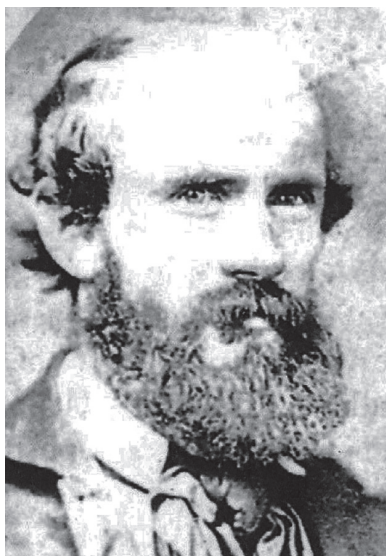
*Editor's Note: This talk was an OLLI Special Presentation delivered at the R. R. Smith Center for History and Art on March 20, 2015. The Civil War Battle of Piedmont took place in and around the northeastern Augusta County village of Piedmont. The battle took place on June 5, 1864. The Union victory resulted in the capture and temporary occupation of the city of Staunton.*

## **Opposing Generals**

The opposing generals were: for the Union, David Hunter, West Point Class of 1822, major general; for the Confederacy, William Edmondson Jones, West Point Class of 1848, brigadier general. They were both fighters, accomplished tacticians, and effective troop commanders.

Hunter, sixty-two years old and the son of a Presbyterian minister in the Shenandoah Valley, was an ardent abolitionist. He had a dark complexion, black whiskers, and dark brown hair. Known by his contemporaries as “Black Dave,” he had a reputation of having a violent temper and indifference to human suffering. His manner was brusque. Hunter was promoted to Major General of Volunteers in 1861 and served in the Missouri Campaign. In 1862, he was assigned Commander of the Department of the South (South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida). He organized the first Negro regiment mustered into the U.S. Army. For this the Confederacy declared him a “felon to be executed if captured.”

Jones, forty years old from Washington County, Virginia, near the Tennessee border, grew up learning the tough ways that allowed the Appalachian pioneers to survive in the rugged mountains. After a three-year tour in Oregon as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army, he returned home to marry his sweetheart, Eliza. On their trip to his new duty station in Texas, while sailing from New Orleans, a violent storm wrecked their ship and Eliza was drowned. The young widower immersed himself in his duties to avoid the pain of his loss and became “embittered, complaining and suspicious.” He became known as “Old Grumble Jones.” When war



*Confederate General William E. Jones, left, and Union General David Hunter.*

broke out in 1861, Jones raised a company of cavalry in Washington County and served as its captain. His company served under J.E.B. Stuart at First Manassas in 1861 and he rose to the rank of colonel, but in the spring of 1862, he fell out of favor with Stuart.

In July 1862, he received an appointment as colonel of the 7th Virginia Cavalry replacing the fallen Turner Ashby. That August, Jones attacked a vastly superior force at Orange Courthouse. At the request of Stonewall Jackson he was promoted to brigadier general. In 1863 he led his brigade on a joint mission with Gen. John Imboden into Union-held West Virginia. This highly-successful raid destroyed sixteen railroad bridges and two trains, seized 1,000 head of cattle and 1,200 horses, capturing 700 prisoners. Jones rejoined Stuart's cavalry for the Gettysburg campaign. His brigade inflicted 242 casualties on the 6th U.S. Cavalry, defeating it twice. As Jones reported, "The 6th U.S. Cavalry numbers among the things that were."

Stuart's praises for Jones were matched only by his desire to have him removed from his command. Jones was assigned to command a cavalry brigade in East Tennessee; his successes there won him the title in the *Richmond Whig* the "Stonewall Jackson of East Tennessee." His belligerence was consistently rewarded with success; outright failure was unknown. Jones wore no insignia

of rank, no trappings of his office, but his soldiers knew him and were intensely loyal. Now in the Shenandoah Valley, Jones faced a numerically superior force intent on victory. For the first time he commanded a combined arms force consisting of infantry, cavalry, and artillery.

## **II. Strategic Situation**

The Union's grand strategy for defeating the Confederacy consisted of three efforts: taking the Mississippi, blockading southern ports, and taking Richmond. By May of 1864, the first two objectives had been accomplished. Grant's plan was to exert constant pressure at every possible point on the Confederates.

He began a general offensive on four fronts in Virginia. His main army moved south, crossed the Rapidan, and pressed toward Richmond. Concurrently he sent Sigel south up the Shenandoah Valley to destroy the logistic base in Staunton and to proceed on to destroy the rail and canal transportation hub at Lynchburg. Crook was to move from West Virginia to destroy the long railroad bridge across the New River at Radford. Averell was to strike the salt works at Saltville and the lead mines in Wythe County.

Grant, Sigel, Crook, and Averell had all met southern resistance. Only Crook was successful. He burned both bridges over the New River then moved his army north to Meadow Bluff, West Virginia (west of Lewisburg).

## **III. Tactical Situation**

At 7 a.m. the morning of May 21, 1864, Major General Hunter arrived at Belle Grove, the headquarters of the U.S. Army of the Shenandoah camped above Cedar Creek. He carried orders from General Grant relieving Sigel and placing him in command. The rather leisurely and carefree existence under Sigel was at an end. Hunter's order stated that "We are contending against an enemy who is in earnest, and if we expect success, we too need to be in earnest."

Hunter appointed his cousin Col. David Hunter Strother his chief of staff and Capt. Henry A. DuPont, grandson of the founder of the gun powder factory in Delaware, his chief of artillery.

On May 22 Hunter issued his march order which prescribed that each man carry a spare pair of shoes and socks, 100 rounds of ammunition (twice the usual load), and no food except four pounds of hard bread and ten rations of coffee, sugar, and salt. Supplementary supplies were limited to one wagon load for each regiment. Soldiers were to subsist on

the country, having their meat supplied from animals captured in the Valley. Hunter's base of supply was Martinsburg, W.Va.

On May 26, the army moved through Strasburg to Fisher's Hill. Smoke could be seen in Strasburg from several houses ordered burned by Hunter in retribution for guerilla activities. Mosby, (the "Gray Ghost"), McNeil, and Gilmer's guerilla bands continuously attacked supply convoys as they attempted to re-supply Hunter's army. The next day the Union Army of the Shenandoah camped along Pugh's Run just north of Woodstock.

At this time, the man charged with stopping Hunter was John W. Imboden, born near Fishersville, educated at Washington College and a lawyer in Staunton. He had been the first commander of the Staunton Artillery. Brigadier General Imboden's brigade consisted of the 18th and 23rd Virginia Cavalry, the 62nd Virginia Mounted Infantry, and McClanahan's battery of horse artillery, a force of about 1,200 men and horses. He had been appointed by General Lee, Commander of the Valley District. In addition to his brigade, Imboden had Col. Kenton Harper's reserve regiment of boys and old men who furnished their own horses and, in most cases, their own firearms. This regiment numbered roughly 1,100.

General Lee ordered McCausland to move from Christiansburg and ordered Jones to prepare to move to the Valley bringing his brigade, consisting of three regiments, one battalion of infantry, and a six-gun artillery battery, by train from Bristol. Lee had pulled General Breckenridge's command back to the defense of Richmond.

On June 1, Hunter's advance guard encountered Imboden's outposts at Rude's Hill between Mt. Jackson and New Market. From Lacey Springs Imboden telegraphed Jones to let him know he needed help. General Lee ordered Jones to "get all the available forces you can and move at once to Imboden's assistance."

As the federals passed through the month-old battlefield at New Market they encountered the rotting carcasses of dead horses, their hides and shoes having been removed. The South was hard pressed to put shoes on man or beast.

#### **IV. Maneuvers and Clashes Prior to the Battle**

June 2, 5 a.m. The Army of the Shenandoah marched south from New Market. The first cavalry skirmish was at Lacey Springs between the 18th Virginia Cavalry and the 1st Maryland PHB Cavalry. The cavalry clashes continued the rest of the day until Hunter's troops reached Harrisonburg.



Imboden deployed a battalion of troops, including a Rockingham company of reserves as a delaying force south of Harrisonburg. As the pressure increased, he pulled back to his planned defensive position on the south side of North River in the vicinity of Mt. Crawford. He deployed his forces from Bridgewater on his left to Rockland Mills on the right. Strong works were established at all the major fords. Two heavy guns—a twenty-four-pounder howitzer and a twenty-pounder Parrott gun—were employed at the Valley Pike bridge by Marquis Boy's Battery. While the Federals spent the day sacking Harrisonburg the Confederates spent the day preparing for battle.

On June 3, in Harrisonburg. Colonel Strother, Hunter's Chief of Staff, suggested to Hunter that he move by way of Port Republic and take Waynesboro thereby cutting off supplies to Lee from Staunton. Hunter adopted Strother's plan and ordered his army to march for Port Republic early on 4 June.

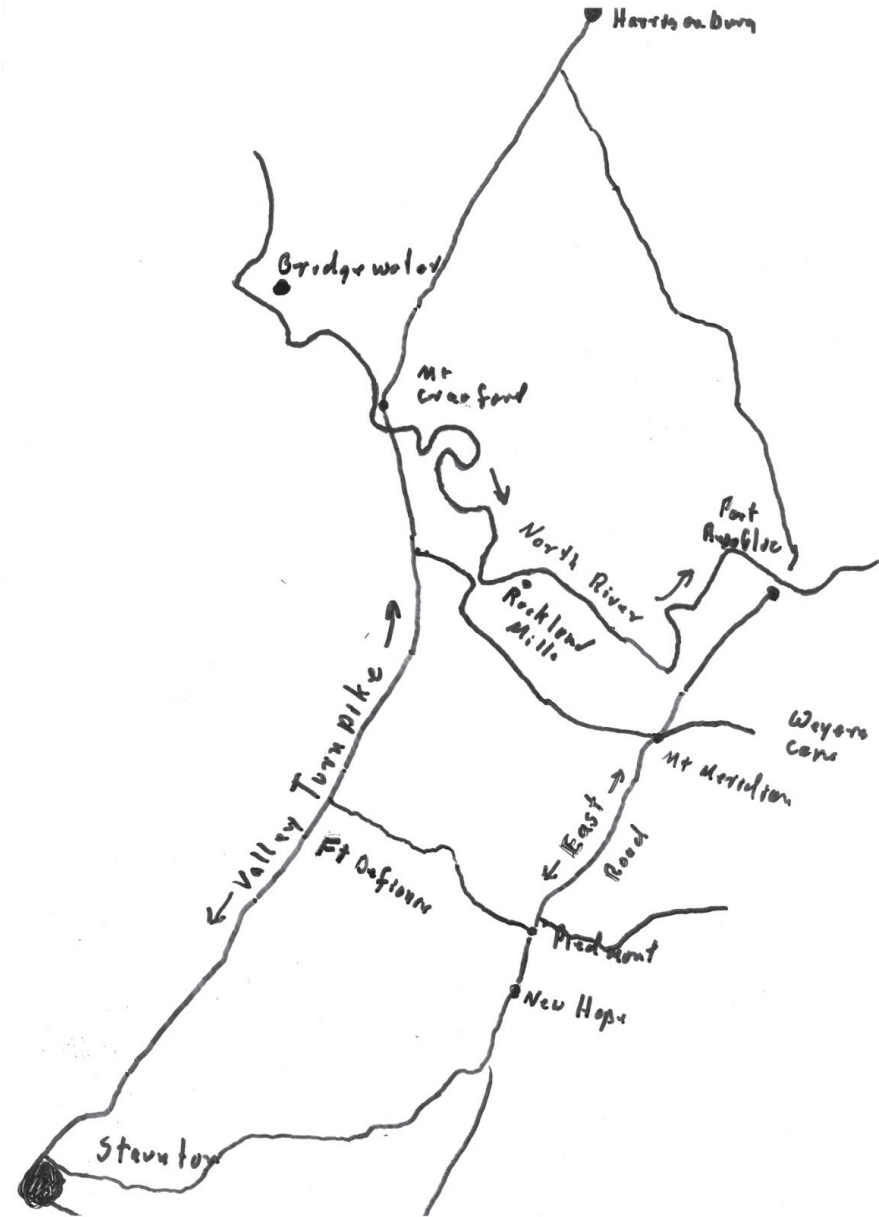
General Jones and his brigade of three infantry regiments arrived Friday night. Jones and Imboden spent the night organizing the many varied units and individual soldiers that had been so hastily brought together. Imboden, the great organizer, used his aids to list each unit and its weapons that arrived and make appropriate assignments. Jones accepted Imboden's organization and deployment of forces and, being the senior general, assumed command of all troops in the Valley District. Friday night was marked by heavy rainstorms. Union soldiers endured the storm under shelter tents, which were described as being "poor protection"; the Confederates had little or no protection. The Confederate commanders did not even think of sleeping that night.

On June 4, Imboden briefed Jones on the tactical situation and presented his organization chart. According to the plans, Jones's brigade would form the nucleus and Imboden's units would form around them. Before noon Brig. Gen. John C. Vaughn and his Tennessee brigade of mounted infantry arrived. Confederate defenders at North River now numbered more than 4,500. Vaughn, being senior to Imboden, became the second in command. Col. George W. Imboden's 18th Virginia Cavalry, with Peck's and Opie's reserve cavalry companies attached, was north of the river to delay the enemy and scout his movements.

Hunter's army fielded 6,000 horses, 7,800 men and officers, and 22 guns. Jones's army fielded 5,600 men and officers and 16 guns.

On June 4, at 5 a.m., Hunter's army broke camp at Harrisonburg and began to march southward on the Valley Pike. Lt. John R. Meigs, Hunter's chief engineer, pleaded with Hunter to send a cavalry regiment toward

Mt. Crawford as a diversion to screen the march toward Port Republic. Hunter consented, and Meigs decided he would go with the cavalry. As Hunter's troops were turning off the Valley Pike onto Port Republic Road, Capt. John H. McNeill, commander of McNeill's Partisan Rangers from the South Branch Valley, W.Va., observed the flanking movement. He sent a courier via Bridgewater to warn Imboden.



Map showing the roads, communities, and river around the battlefield.

The advances of Hunter's army halted at the unbridged North River. (Stonewall Jackson had burned the bridge in 1862 after the battle of Port Republic.) Hunter ordered his pontoons to be brought forward and assembled. None of the engineers knew how to put up the canvas pontoons. Hunter's chief of engineers was off joyriding with the New York Cavalry.

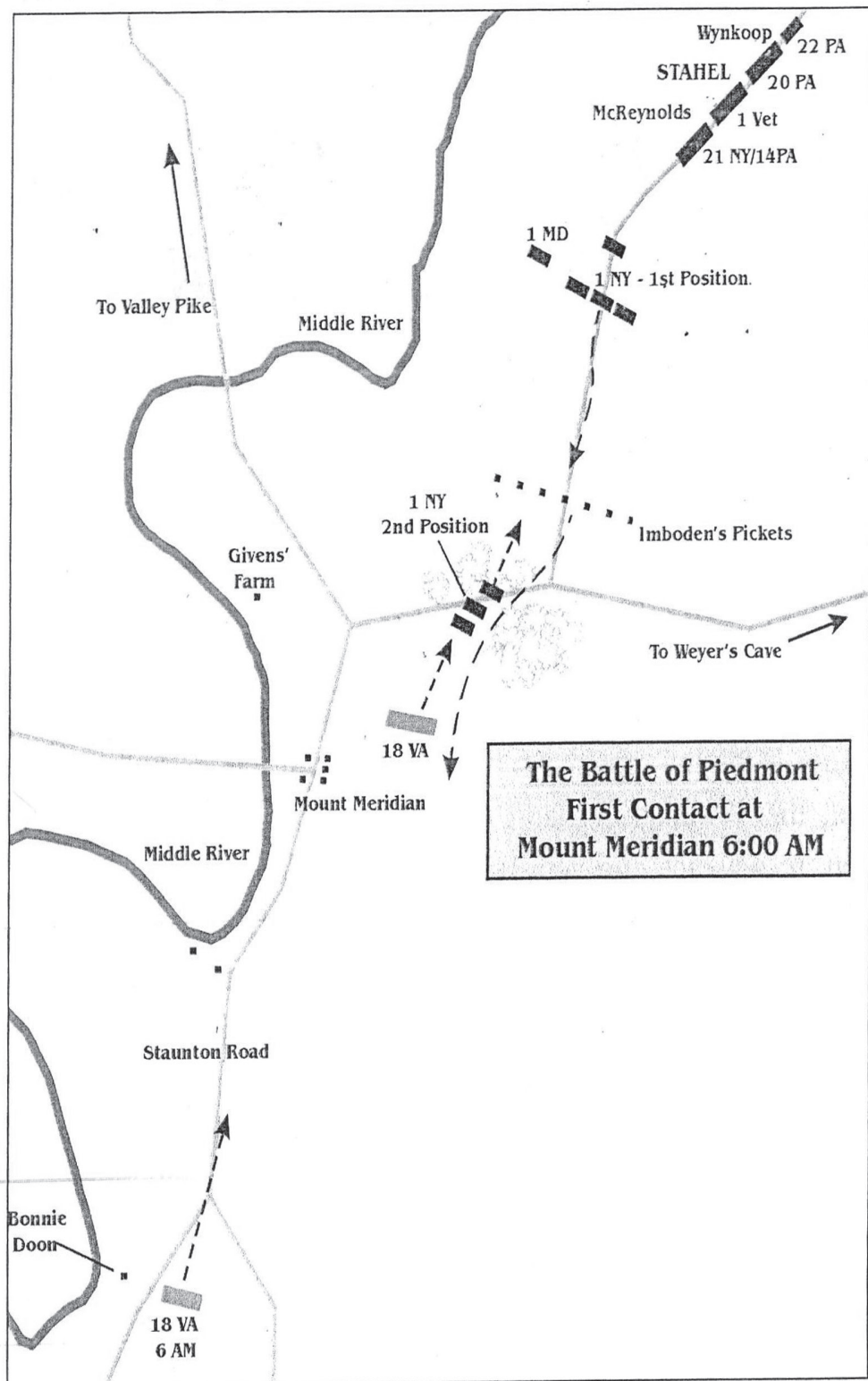
Meanwhile, a scout from the 18th Virginia Cavalry reported to Jones that the enemy had turned toward Port Republic; shortly after that McNeill's courier reported the same. The only feasible option open to General Jones was to move his army off North River and interpose it at some point between Hunter and Staunton. Imboden strongly recommended Mowry Hill, located about eight miles northeast of Staunton. The problem was that Mowry Hill was closer to Hunter than it was to Jones, and Jones's part of the army had no sleep the night before. They could not wait. Jones was faced with executing a night march over roads he had never seen.

Imboden would take the cavalry and move to a point near Hunter at Port Republic where he would delay Hunter's advance, while Jones moved the infantry and artillery, set up a defensive position and planned to be ready by noon on June 5. Vaughn went with Jones. Opie's and Peck's reserve companies of cavalry also went with Jones.

After a long delay caused by the pontoon debacle, Hunter's army made it across North River and decided to camp at Port Republic. He made his headquarters at Madison Hall (which Jackson had used as his headquarters in 1862). While they were there, Hunter's troops burned the woolen mill that supplied cloth for the Confederate Army.

Imboden led his cavalry south along the Valley Pike to Pleasant Grove Church of the Brethren where they turned east on the Forge Road to Mount Meridian four miles south of Port Republic on the East Road to Staunton.

Jones received a telegram from General Lee informing him that no troops would be sent from Richmond. He must fight Hunter and very soon, before Crook could join Hunter's army. Jones studied his map. If his army was at Mowry Hill (three miles south of the crossroad at Piedmont) Hunter could easily bypass his position by using the road he had just used to cross from the Valley Pike and be in Staunton unopposed. He must select a position where there would be no road open for Hunter. Jones decided to dig in at the crossroads at Piedmont.





Imboden established his headquarters at Bonnie Doon, the stately farm of Samuel Crawford. He deployed his pickets at Alexander Given's farm where the East Road forked northward to Port Republic and eastward to Weyers Cave (now Grottoes). His encampment stretched two-and-a-half miles along the East Road from Bonnie Doon toward Piedmont. Opie's and Peck's companies camped on the Shaver farm near Piedmont.

Near dawn Jones's brigade reached the crossroad at Piedmont. He selected ground a few hundred yards north of the crossroad. By anchoring his left flank on the bluffs over Middle River he had only 400 yards to defend on the East Road. About 400 yards across an open crop field there was a small stream (Crawford Run) and woods that would restrict Hunter's movements on the right. The crest of the hill offered observation over the next hill to the north.

The situation before dawn on June 5 was this: Hunter and his army were bivouacked at Port Republic (having crossed North River), headquarters was at Madison Hall in the village. Imboden's cavalry, including Opie's and Peck's companies, bivouacked along the East Road between the Shaver farm and Bonnie Doon, headquarters was at Bonnie Doon and pickets were stationed on the Givens farm in the vicinity of Mt. Meridian. Jones's Brigade, Vaughn's Brigade, and the Reserve battalion under Colonel Harper were digging in at Piedmont.

Hunter sent his cavalry out at 4 a.m. the rainy morning of June 5 with the 1st New York Cavalry in the lead. At 5 a.m. the infantry was set in motion without having made even a cup of coffee.

At 6 a.m., elements of the 1st New York Cavalry struck the pickets of the 18th Virginia Cavalry on the Givens farm. Imboden at Bonnie Doon, hearing the staccato crack of carbine fire, ordered his closest regiment, the 18th Virginia Cavalry, commanded by his brother Col. George Imboden, to advance and support the pickets. He also sent orders to Col. Robert White to saddle up the 23rd Virginia Cavalry and a courier to alert Captain Opie. (Imboden had been ordered by Jones to not become decisively engaged.) The 18th Virginia raced through Mt. Meridian, continued northward a short distance and deployed in a field on the east side of the road. Maj. Quinn, commander of the 1st New York, attacked the pickets with three companies on the line. The Confederate pickets retreated up the hill and passed through Imboden's defensive position without halting. When Quinn's three companies reached Colonel Imboden's position, they received a devastating volley, emptying many saddles. Imboden raised

his sword and led the 18th Virginia down the hill in a classic mounted charge. His attack hit the Federals with such force that they fell back beyond the road to Weyers Cave.

Hunter and his staff had galloped rapidly to the head of the column and ordered Maj. Gen. Julius Stahel, the Cavalry Division commander, to "attack the enemy and check his advance." Stahel was able to pull the 21st New York and the 14th Pennsylvania out of the column and join the 1st New York. The Virginians had lost their momentum and now found themselves outnumbered three to one. They wheeled their mounts and headed back toward Mt. Meridian in wild disorder. One Union soldier recalled seeing riderless horses running wild over the dead and wounded and among the living. General Imboden found himself cut off from his command and pursued by an entire company of Federals. He later related "I owed my escape to the speed and great power of my horse, a gift stallion from my command, who carried me at a bound over a post and rail fence into the river road below the village."

The Union cavalry horses could not negotiate the obstacle and Imboden raced up the East Road, rejoining the 18th just beyond the village. At one point a Union trooper dashed at General Imboden blasting away with his revolver. Imboden attempted to draw his pistol, but it caught in the holster so he yelled to one of his men, "Kill the Yankee!" The Virginia trooper "leveled his carbine, and the Yankee tumbled dead."

The 18th Virginia was streaming up the road and through the fields toward the main cavalry camp on the Bonnie Doon farm. When Opie received the order from General Imboden his and Peck's troopers mounted and rode rapidly the two-and-a-half miles toward Bonnie Doon. As they galloped forward, hundreds of Imboden's demoralized troopers fled past them in confusion. The Augusta County Reserves maintained their composure and continued forward as veterans passed them retreating toward Piedmont. When Opie saw Stahel's column of blue horsemen advancing, he dismounted his command, sent every fourth man rearward to hold horses and arranged his men, armed with infantry muskets, behind a brush-covered rail fence at the edge of a clearing.

Noting that the sight of regular soldiers falling back rattled his young troops he shouted, "Now men, if it is necessary to run, I will start first, but if any man runs before I do I will shoot him." Not a man flinched, and they repulsed several Union frontal assaults. Captain Chrisman's Boy Co. and Harnsburger's Old Men, both Rockingham County reserve cavalry,

were assigned to Maj. Sturgis Davis, a Marylander, along with Opie's and Peck's Augusta Co reserve companies. As the troopers of the 18th raced to the rear, some of the horsemen made the leap over the plank fence to the rear of the Crawford house along with General Imboden. Others jumped their horses over the plank fence on the north side of the Bonnie Doon front lane to find they did not have room enough to get momentum to clear the fence on the south side. They were trapped in the lane. The New York regiment was deployed to attack. Davis ordered the Rockingham Reserve companies to charge. The boys and old men thundered down the road in a "reckless thrust" and hit the head of the New York regiment with a crash. It was hand-to-hand combat with sabers and revolvers. Both Captains Harnsburger and Chrisman were wounded.

Meanwhile Opie, Peck, and Davis's dismounted Marylanders turned back several assaults in the field east of the road. The boys and old men held the 21st New York long enough for the 23rd Virginia Cavalry to get mounted and join the fight. The 18th Virginia cavalrymen were able to extricate themselves from the lane because of the charge of the boys and old men. The quick and decisive action of the Boy and Old Men companies was crucial. They firmly held their position until a staff officer pulled them back before they could be attacked from the flank.

Opie redeployed his two companies on a bluff on the south side of Polecat Draft. When Jones received Imboden's courier requesting artillery support he ordered Capt. John McClanahan, a Texan and commander of a six-gun battery, to move a two-gun section forward to support Imboden's brigade. Lt. Carter Berkeley's section was selected. Jones sent Maj. Brewer's battalion to protect the section. Meanwhile Imboden's brigade had taken a new stand above Crawford Run on the east side of the East Road. Jones rode forward on the road to personally check the situation. As he did, General Imboden and Colonel White, commander of the 23rd Virginia Cavalry, arrived on winded and lathered horses to report the action of the morning.

When Imboden realized that Jones was preparing to defend the high ground at Piedmont he exclaimed, "My God General! You are not going to fight here, and lose all the advantage of position we shall have at Mowry's Hill?"

Jones roared back, "Yes! I am going to fight right here, if Hunter advances promptly to the attack. If he don't I will go over there and attack him where he is."

Berkeley's section passed through Piedmont at a gallop with his cannoneers yelling enthusiastically and waving at the ladies on the porches of the village.

### **Phase One**

When they arrived at the forward slope of the hill, Jones's army was defending, Imboden directed Berkeley to a rock bluff on the west side of the road overlooking Crawford Run and Polecat Draft. The two guns were wheeled into battery and dropped trails. As Berkeley scanned to his front, the country appeared blue with Federals and smoke from a burning mill at Mt. Meridian darkened the sky. Brewer's battalion with two companies of the Niter and Mining Battalion attached deployed in the wood line in front of the guns and erected breastworks of fence rails and fallen timber. They had clear fields of fire across Crawford Run and Polecat Draft.

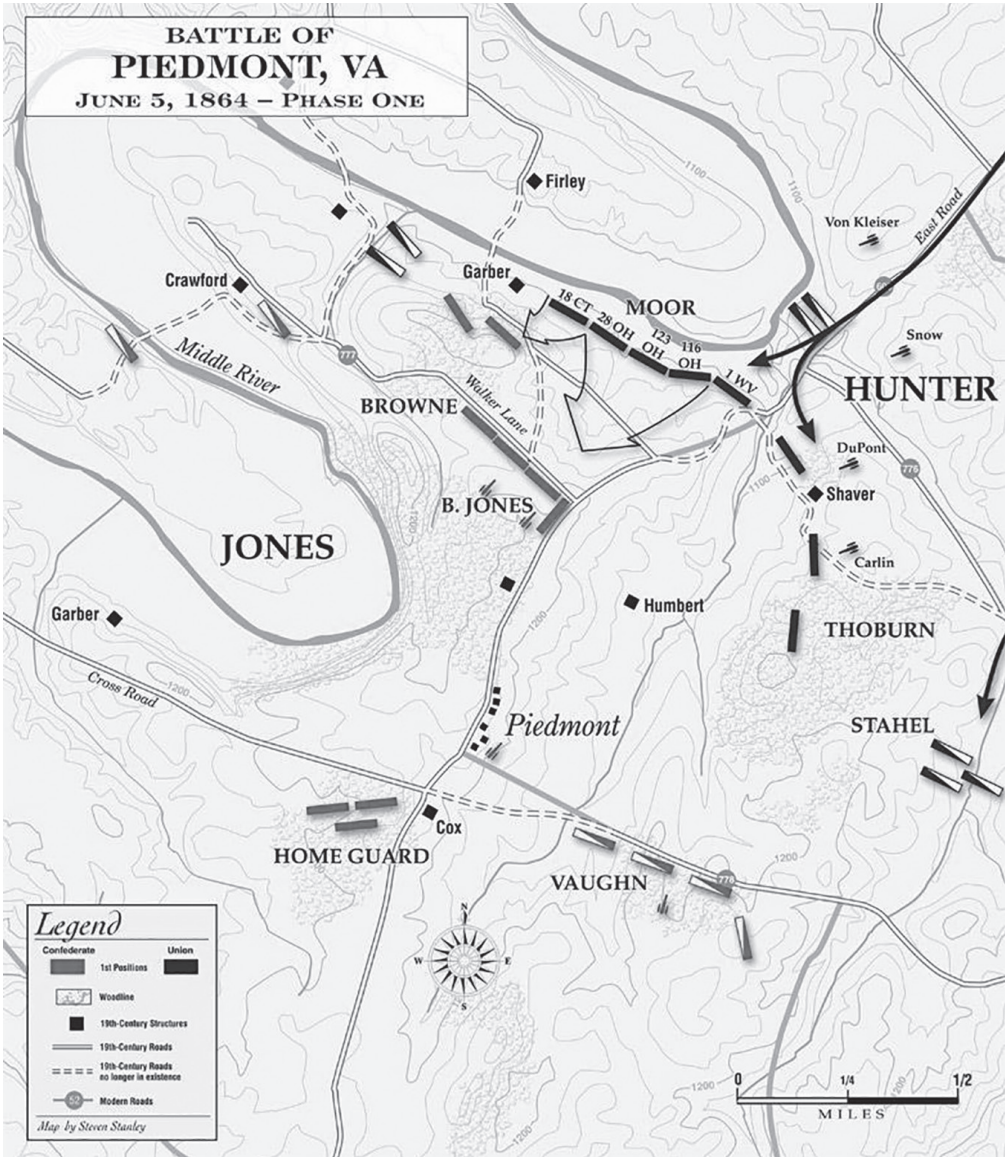
At 9 a.m., Berkeley's guns began to lay a devastating fire on the Union Cavalry. General Stahel shifted Wynkoop's brigade to the right and moved Lt. Samuel Shearer's section of horse artillery to support the cavalry from a position between Polecat Draft and Crawford Run west of the road. The precision fire of the Virginia gunners nullified any effort of the Union section. Brewer and Berkeley held Stahel's cavalry division at bay for almost two hours, purchasing enough time for the balance of Jones's army to reach Piedmont and move into position. When Hunter received Stahel's courier telling of the stiffening Confederate resistance, he ordered his chief of artillery, Capt. DuPont, to subdue the Confederate guns. DuPont moved two batteries into position on the west side of the East Road north of Polecat Draft. The concentrated fire of twelve guns caused Berkeley to limber up and get the hell back up the road.

The Federal attack began with Col. Augustus Moor's 1st Brigade moving toward Brewer's position with three regiments on the line in the small space between the East Road and a bend in Middle River. Two more batteries of Union artillery joined the two, which had caused Berkeley to pull back. Moor's initial attack was thrown back so thoroughly that Hunter ordered his wagon trains turned around in preparation for a withdrawal to the north. Moor's brigade with the addition of the 1st West Virginia doggedly attacked until finally the 116th Ohio was able to turn Brewer's right flank and pour heavy enfilade fire into Brewer's right and rear. Supporting Moor's right flank was Colonel John Wynkoop's 20th Pennsylvania Cavalry. They had crossed Middle River probably at the



ford in front of the Finley house. Wynkoop's charge brought disorder to what had been a relatively orderly retreat by Brewer's troops. Brewer's battalion retreated back to the main Confederate line where it reformed and took a position on the left of Browne's Brigade. Jones and his Niter and Mining troops moved in with Jones's brigade.

The delaying action executed by the determined efforts of such leaders as all three Imbodens, Major Brewer, Captain Opie, and Lt. Henry Berkeley gave General Jones the time necessary to move his command into a position to deal with Hunter's attack. Jones ordered Imboden to



move his damaged brigade that was deployed on the East Side of the road on the Shaver farm and being pounded by Federal artillery to move back and take a position on Vaughn's right at the village.

"Throw out flankers to the front of Round Hill and protect my right flank," Jones said.

General Jones's disposition on the high ground at Piedmont was as follows: from left to right Col. Beuhring Jones's 1st Brigade on the left with his left resting on the Middle River bluffs, Lt. Col William E. Fifes's 36th Virginia Infantry anchoring the left flank on the bluffs, Lt. Col. Henry Beckeley's 45th Battalion of Virginia Infantry (from West Virginia coal country, Hatfields and McCoys territory), Capt. James W. Johnston's 60th Virginia Infantry on the 1st Brigade's right, Col. William H. Browne's 2nd Brigade extended the line to the East Road. From left to right the line-up was Brewer's Battalion, Lt. Col. Alexander Davis's 45th Virginia Infantry Regiment, Col. James Love's Thomas Legion. On the right flank the Thomas Legion's line veered southward parallel to the East Road. On Love's right flank there were four guns of Marquis's Boy Battery, one gun in the road, three in a plowed field east of the road. McClanahan's Battery set up east of the Staunton Road near the edge of Piedmont. There was a 600-yard gap between Browne's right flank and Vaughn's left.

General Jones established his headquarters behind the Thomas Legion's right flank on the highest terrain just west of the East Road. Troubled by the gap between Browne's and Vaughn's brigades, he ordered Col. Beuhring Jones to detach half of his command and move it to fill the gap. Colonel Jones dispatched the 500 men of Captain Johnston's 60th Virginia Infantry. General Jones directed them to form their battle line parallel to the road in the center of the gap. They deployed near the village with their left flank 300 yards from the Thomas Legion's right and 175 yards north of Vaughn's brigade. Neither flank was tied in. Their positions overlooked the Crawford Run Valley. Grass and clover covered the hillside to the stream and the ground east of the stream was wooded. When Berkeley and Brewer moved back Berkeley rejoined McClanahan's Battery and Brewer moved his battalion and the two companies of Niter Miners to a position on the 2nd Brigade's left.

The first demonstration against the main Confederate line occurred when Wynkoop sent a battalion of his cavalry brigade to probe the Confederate left flank. The 36th Virginia and Jones's Niter and Mining Company were dug in on the Sheep Hill, their left flank extending almost to the river, leaving no room for the attackers to get around the flank.

Colonel Moor quickly reformed his brigade after his successful attack against Brewer's battalion. With Wynkoop's cavalry on his right, Moor attacked Jones's main defensive line. They were stopped with heavy casualties all along the line. The Confederates behind their breastwork slightly outnumbered Moor's attacking force.

Simultaneously with Moor's attack, Sullivan advanced Thoburn's brigade through Shaver's woods on the east side of the East Road, toward Imboden's brigade. When Thoburn realized that he was more than a half mile ahead of Moor, with his right flank exposed, he halted and pulled back into the woods. About that time he was spotted by Captain Bryan, commander of the Lewisburg Artillery, who began a barrage on the woods hiding Thoburn's four regiments.

After the reports of Moor's advances, Hunter and his staff moved to the Shaver house and contemplated how to achieve victory. He directed DuPont to silence the Confederate artillery. The Union's four batteries formed an arc that partially encircled Jones's position. DuPont established his command post between Snow's and Holman's batteries on the hill just north of the Shaver house where he had a commanding view of the battlefield. Using a system of mounted orderlies, he controlled and coordinated the firing of all four batteries. He then concentrated the fires of all twenty-two guns on one Confederate battery at a time, starting with Marquis's Boy Battery. The brutal fire killed six of Marquis's young cannoneers and wounded another. Thus DuPont had effectively deprived General Jones of any effective artillery support and the Union gunners began to shell the Confederate infantry with near impunity.

Moor, after reconnoitering the ground and the Confederate positions, noted that artillery could do great damage to the opposing fortifications. A request to Hunter's headquarters brought two Napoleons from Von Kleiser's Battery. Solid shot at a range of only 500 yards had a devastating effect on the fence rail breastworks protecting the Confederates. Colonel Jones's message to General Jones suggested "some artillery would render great service in engaging that enemy in my front." General Jones realized that he had to reposition his battle line to save his infantry and to unite the two wings of his army.

Meanwhile Moor began a second attack with five regiments on line and Von Kleiser's two guns in support. Wynkoop's brigade of cavalry were close behind to exploit any breaks in the Southern line. Sullivan, the Infantry Division Commander, rode up and down the battle line

shouting encouragement to his men and, in the process, had three horses shot out from under him. Moor led his brigade to within 150 yards of the Confederate position where it came under a steady and withering fire. The bluecoats fell in droves and finally broke and streamed to the rear.

As the Union attack faltered, the Confederate troops launched a determined counterattack, taunting the Yankees with cries of "New Market, New Market." When the counterattack pulled back, Confederate soldiers carried several Union soldiers back to the safety of the Confederate lines and ultimately to a field hospital in New Hope. On the Union left, Thoburn's brigade did not advance in conjunction with Moor's assault. Thoburn awaited the outcome of the assault instead of supporting it. He withdrew to the high ground behind DuPont's batteries (behind the Shaver house).

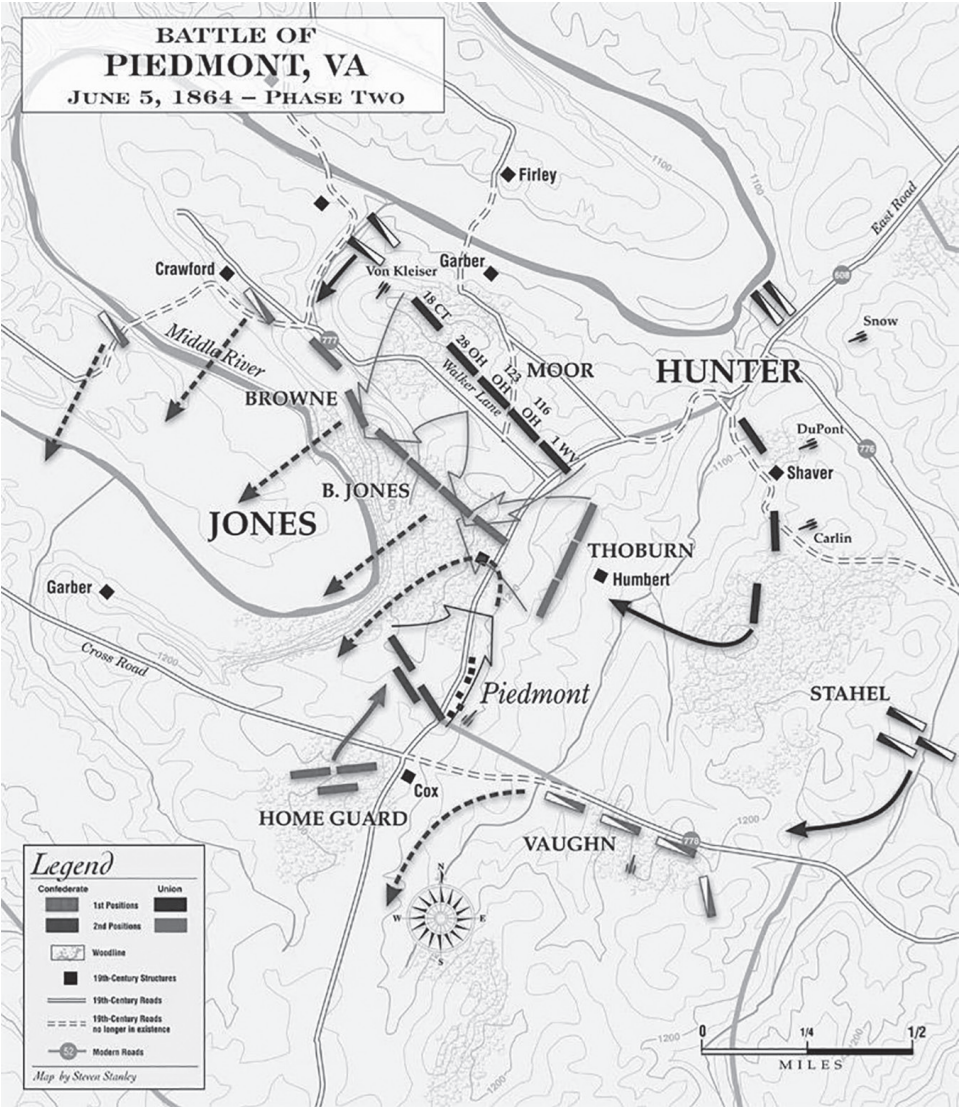
With this success, Jones abandoned his plan to reposition his forces south of the Cross Road. Instead he moved the 60th Virginia from its position facing eastward along the East Road to form a second line of battle behind Browne's brigade. He ordered Vaughn to move three regiments of his brigade to the left wing. Colonel Jones could not fathom why this was done. Vaughn's three regiments squeezed into the already well-defended Confederate left. The 59th Tennessee went to the extreme left on the reverse slope with their backs on the river. This movement reduced the strength of the Confederate right wing by one third. Imboden's line was paper thin with his right flank refused southward to Round Hill.

General Jones's tactic was to concentrate his force and counterattack the battered right wing of the Union Army. Jones was thinking offense, not defense. It was a gamble. Jones overplayed his hand and "Black Dave" called his move. Standing on the front porch of the Shaver house Hunter could see Vaughn's regiments moving around the village to reinforce the Confederate left. Knowing that Moor's battered brigade could not stand another heavy attack, Hunter being aware of the gap in the Confederate line, decided to strike hard and fast. He sent his provost marshal Col. William Starr "to ride with full speed to Thoburn and order him to move his brigade across the valley and assault the enemy's open flank." Hunter sent Moor orders to conduct a supporting attack on the right. At 3 p.m. Starr delivered Hunter's order to Thoburn near DuPont's command post.

Thoburn began his movement with four of his six regiments. As the infantry moved forward, Hunter directed DuPont to concentrate his fire on the Confederate infantry. The Union batteries were not disturbed



by intermittent fire from Bryan's three long-range guns. The increased activity across the entire front of Hunter's army and the artillery bombardment created a situation that prevented Jones and his officers from determining Hunter's intentions until it was too late. Thoburn's regiments moved undetected through the woods along Crawford Run parallel to the East Road. Thoburn had almost reached his final assault position when officers from the Thomas Legion observed his approach and reported it to General Jones. Jones immediately comprehended the seriousness of the situation and raced to the 60th Virginia and ordered Johnston to hurry to the gap. He dispatched a courier to Vaughn to do



the same. He also ordered Colonel Harper's Reserves and a section of McClanahan's Battery to move forward from their position south of the Cross Road. He then dashed back toward the East Road to rally his troops for the coming attack.

Thoburn's brigade, executing a turning movement, began its assault through the clover field on the right flank of the Thomas Legion. When the forces collided, a vicious hand-to-hand melee occurred between the Thomas Legion and the 12th West Virginia. As the surgeon of the 12th attested, "I saw many men who had their brains knocked out with clubbed muskets." The situation quickly became hopeless for the Confederates. Jones's desperate repositioning of forces to include Harper's Reserves advancing down the East Road poured a withering fire into the left flank of the 24th Massachusetts. That move held the Union attack to a nip and tuck struggle until the pressure on the Confederates became too great, and their line began to crumble. General Jones galloped among his retreating soldiers in a last gasp attempt to salvage the victory that a short time earlier had seemed certain. With his hat in his hand, he cheered the men, urging them to rally and hold their ground. As he attempted to rally his men, a minie ball struck him in the head, knocking him from his horse, dead. The battle was decided.

While Thoburn's attack was crushing the Confederate right flank and rear, Moor's supporting attack struck the Confederate left head-on. The fighting was severe, much of it hand-to-hand combat. Colonel Browne and Major Sanders were severely wounded. Major Brewer was killed. Large numbers of the Confederates went down the steep bluffs and crossed the river. Many were captured by Wynkoop's Cavalry Brigade, who chased them across the river and through a cornfield on the other side. Colonel Jones was captured by James Snedden, a musician.

On the East Road, the reserves fled in confusion through Lieutenant Berkeley's two-gun section of artillery. Captain Martin, General Jones adjutant, ordered Berkeley to limber up and save his guns from capture. Capt. Bryan's Lewisburg Artillery likewise was barely able to avoid capture; taking the cross road toward the Valley Pike. Although wounded, General Stahel ordered McReynolds's Brigade to pursue the Confederates toward New Hope. Some delay occurred in organizing the pursuit. Meanwhile, Imboden took command of the situation and moved his brigade to the Crumpecker Farm just north of New Hope. When he arrived there McClanahan was unlimbering four guns of the Staunton

Horse Artillery, and Colonel Day's 12th Tennessee Cavalry (of Vaughn's Brigade) was setting up a defensive position. McReynolds ordered the 1st Veteran (NY) Cavalry to charge up the East Road into the retreating Confederates. The New Yorkers pounded through the trees, shooting and sabering fleeing Confederates as they went. The Tennesseans held their fire until the Veteran Cavalry closed on their position, at which point they poured a deadly volley of rifle fire and canister into the charging blue mass. The Union column seemed to melt away. As Imboden put it, "there was only a mass of groaning men and horses." The strong rear guard action dissuaded Hunter from attempting further pursuit. He ordered his army to bivouac on the battlefield at Piedmont.

The effort cost the Union 850 killed and wounded. The Confederacy suffered 600 killed and wounded and lost 1,000 unwounded who became prisoners of war. The Union victory "wiped out the disgrace of New Market." The post-battle scene revealed the terrible slaughter that had occurred. Major Sanders, who had a bullet pass entirely through his chest and exit near his spine, was left by medical personnel for dead. The next day he was taken to Bonnie Doon for burial. The owner of the farm, a Mr. Crawford, detected a slight pulse and administered "half a pint of mountain whiskey which stimulated his heart and lung action and led to his recovery." He lived until 1921.

Colonel Browne, commander of the Confederate 2nd Brigade, had a leg wound and was taken to the Shaver farm house, which had become a field hospital. Captain DuPont, a West Point classmate of Browne, learned of his plight and came to visit. DuPont was relieved to note that Browne did not seem seriously wounded. Believing that Browne would soon be on his way to a prison camp in the North, he gave him the last ten dollars he had. Browne died that night.

At New Hope, Vaughn and Imboden scraped together the remnants of their defeated force. Vaughn also performed the unwelcome duty of notifying Lee of the defeat, including the fact that General Jones was killed, and that Staunton could not be protected. He prudently determined to move to Rockfish Gap.

Hunter set the U.S. Army of the Shenandoah in motion toward Staunton at 6 a.m. the next day. Morale among the troops was "lofty." One soldier said he was "happy as a big sunflower." The main body of the column reached Staunton about noon. Behind the color guard Thoburn's brigade was the lead unit. The infantry marched through town and set

up camp one mile west of Staunton. Hunter warned the Stauntonians that “we are warring according to the rules of civilized nations” as such all “warlike stores, manufactories and buildings which appertained to the Confederacy will be destroyed. . . . [but] Private property and noncombatants will be respected.” Hunter’s army burned all railroad depots and facilities, a woolen mill, steam mill, wagon factory, stables, and forage houses. They also destroyed a shoe factory, warehouses, tanneries, blacksmith shops, and the entrepreneurial activities that benefited the Confederacy. His troops did take precautions to avoid destruction of private residences. Hunter’s unit tore up the Virginia Central Railroad as far west as Swoope and east as far as Fishersville, including a fifty-foot wooden trestle over Christians Creek. They seized all the cattle and horses they came across in the surrounding country. On June 10, 1864, Hunter’s Army of the Shenandoah marched out of Staunton toward Lexington.

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# *Historian's Notebook:*

## John Newton Opie

By Von Hardesty, Ph.D.

**Editor's Note:** *Von Hardesty, retired historian and curator at the Smithsonian Institution, recently rotated off the Augusta County Historical Society board after many years of service. We are grateful that he has promised to continue his local research and writing. This article is the first of what we hope will be many insightful essays on local history topics.*

For centuries, the cavalry played a dramatic role in military operations. This was true in the American Civil War, where both sides employed mounted troops for reconnaissance and skirmishing. For the Confederacy, James Ewell Brown (J.E.B.) Stuart, John S. Mosby, Turner Ashby, and Nathan Bedford Forrest, to name a few, garnered popular fame for their exploits. The most prominent of all Confederate cavalry figures arguably was J. E. B. Stuart; in the defense of Richmond, he boldly encircled the Union Army of the Potomac. Mobility and heroism gave the cavalry a special elan that was rarely matched in other spheres of the military.

Lesser known, but flamboyant in his own right, was Augusta County's John Newton Opie (1844-1906). He enlisted at the age of seventeen as an infantryman, the very day that Virginia seceded from the Union. After a brief enrollment in the Virginia Military Institute, he eventually joined the Confederate cavalry. His wartime experiences between 1861 and 1865 were routinely high risk, involving constant movement and numerous clashes with the enemy. He did not escape combat injuries and endured a life-threatening stint at the Union's notorious prisoner of war camp at Elmira, New York. He was a survivor. In 1899, Opie decided to publish his own recollections of the Civil War in a fascinating memoir, *A Rebel Cavalryman, with Lee, Stuart, and Jackson*.

When I moved to Staunton in 2011, I was first introduced to the life and military career of John Opie by my then neighbor, Evarts Opie. As a newcomer to Staunton, I had expressed to Evarts my keen interest in learning more about the Civil War in Augusta County. This interest had been prompted by my own family history. At that time, I had become

fascinated with the war experiences of my distant forebear, Richard Terry, who had served with an Ohio infantry regiment at Chattanooga and on General William Sherman's march through the South. A contemporary of John Opie, Terry was also a common soldier. My family had only recently found information on Terry's Civil War experiences when they discovered twenty letters to his wife, mislaid for many decades.

Evarts Opie loaned me a copy of *A Rebel Cavalryman*, a memoir of his grandfather. This gesture was most welcome and offered me an avenue to see the impact of the war on one resident of Augusta County. We discussed the merits and pitfalls of wartime letters and postwar memoirs. Evarts had been the publisher of the *News Leader*, so he possessed the sharp eye of a traditional journalist for historical accuracy. He warned me that John N. Opie—given his remarkable career—may have exaggerated certain events surrounding his war service, although this was not easy to determine. His memoir was an important source on the war in the Shenandoah Valley. My own professional background as an historian at the Smithsonian had allowed me to conduct extensive research on Russian memoirs related to World War II, so this genre of historical literature was not foreign to me.

As a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute, Opie aspired to join the cavalry. He did not wish to endure the war as a foot soldier. His admittance to the 6<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry meant no small amount of risk, constant movement, numerous skirmishes with the enemy, privations, and the grievous loss of comrades.

The narrative for *Rebel Cavalryman* is chronological. Opie's passage from infantryman to cavalry officer is a testament to dedicated service. His rank as captain in the Virginia 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry mirrored his upward mobility. He was wounded in action in 1863 at Brandy Station, and he later served at the Battle of Piedmont in his native Augusta County. His military career ended abruptly in December 1864 when he was captured on a patrol behind Union lines. He spent the final months of the Civil War at the notorious Union prison camp at Elmira, New York.

In his war recollections, Opie makes frequent asides to describe the opposing Union leaders and the uneven struggle to stem the tide of the enemy advance in the Shenandoah Valley. Toward the enemy Opie expressed measured admiration, especially when covering individuals and events he deemed heroic. The overarching narrative is punctuated with anecdotes of a personal nature—some quite eccentric. If there is a realm of exaggeration in the memoir, it may reside in these anecdotes.

The fundamental motive for Opie's steadfast dedication to the Confederate cause is evident: a willingness to defend Virginia against an external foe. His personal undertaking pivoted on his view that military service was indeed a noble cause. Opie does not include commentary that explicitly suggests broader forces at play. For the modern reader, of course, there is an interest in searching for deeper motives, real or imagined. But frontline soldiers routinely tie their fate to everyday considerations, often a keen desire to survive and to remain loyal to comrades in arms. If on the defense, the combatant has real and enduring attachment to the home locality. John Opie seems typical in this regard.

The reader may be surprised to find that Opie does not appear animated by deep-seated anger or bitterness toward Union soldiers. Only one chapter expresses any bitterness, his recollections of the ignoble "bushwhackers or swamp dragons." These individuals employed stealth and engaged in sudden attacks, sometimes even against civilians. Opie himself faced the dangers of ambush more than once. He called these attackers simply "murderers," when caught they were executed on the spot.

*The top portion of John Newton Opie's extensive obituary in the Staunton newspaper in 1906.*

#### CAPT. JOHN N. OPIE DEAD.

##### Well Known and Popular Citiz-n Passes Away.

Our readers will regret to hear of the death of Capt. John N. Opie, which occurred Friday morning at his home in this city, after an illness of several months. Capt. Opie was born at Millview, Jefferson county, now West Virginia, March 14, 1844, and was a son of Col. Heirome I. Opie. He moved to Augusta county in 1856, and lived for a number of years at "Selma," near town. At the beginning of the war he joined the West Augusta Guard, but was later taken out of the army and entered, as student at the V. M. I., where he only remained a short time, when he again entered the army, serving with the 12th cavalry which became famous for its valor as the Clark Cavalry. At First Manassas he was presented with a medal for gallantry, by his colonel, W. H. H. Baylor. He served with distinction in nearly all the important battles of the war. He was wounded at Brandy Station and came home. He organized the Home Guards and was their captain. At the battle of Piedmont as captain of the Home Guards of Staunton he covered General Jones retreat and saved the Confederates from annihilation. He was taken prisoner along with the late Dr. Carter Berkeley and sent to Elmira, N. Y.

After the civil war he married Miss Belle Harman, daughter of Colonel M. G. Harman.

Senator Opie graduated in law under Professor John Minor at the University of Virginia and has practiced law here since. In the early 70's he was sent to the House of Delegates over A. H. H. Stuart, serving several consecutive terms. In 1879 he was married in Baltimore to Miss Ida Walton Fletcher, daughter of Rev. Patterson Fletcher.

In 1896 Capt. Opie was elected State Senator from Augusta, and served his constituents in a brilliant manner until he was defeated for re-nomination. He was an avowed champion of the people against the corporations, and was greatly beloved by his constituents, many of whom express their heartfelt sympathy for his children. Capt. Opie was a thoroughly manly man, possessing courage of the highest order and honesty which no temptation could shake. He was warm hearted and impulsive and his many excellent qualities won and held a large circle of friends to whom the news of his death will carry deep sorrow. Captain Opie besides his prominence as soldier and senator was an author of note, one of his most popular books being "A Rebel Cavalry-

While reading his memoir, I was often disappointed that Opie did not go into greater detail with certain experiences. His sojourn at the Elmira Prison arouses great curiosity. For Opie, this was one of the most life-threatening interludes in the war. There was disease and near starvation. He offers the reader a general summary of the horrors associated with POW life, but provides only sketchy details on his personal survival.

He was paroled on March 14, 1865. Two months later, on May 8, he declared his oath of allegiance to the United States, ending nearly four years of rebellion. The return home was arduous and peacetime found him without resources or a clear direction for the future. This grim postwar reality is not covered in *A Rebel Cavalryman*. His war memoir was published a quarter century after Appomattox. It is not an autobiography, but narrowly focuses on his participation in the Civil War, 1861-1865. John Opie does not touch upon his personal life. He married twice and studied law at the University of Virginia. He emerged as a prominent Staunton lawyer and served as a delegate and later senator in the Virginia legislature.

When John Opie wrote his *A Rebel Cavalryman*, he adopted a more conciliatory posture toward the outcome of the Civil War. "I suppose," he wrote, "that if the Southern Confederacy had been established, and with it, the right of peaceful secession, this great republic would have been divided into many petty republics, consuming each other in war, and becoming, eventually, the territory of some foreign power; therefore, it is as it should be." (Page 336).

**Source:** See John N. Opie, *A Rebel Cavalryman with Lee Stuart and Jackson*, Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, 1899 (Facsimile issued in 1972 and 1997 by Morningside Bookshop).



# How was Japan able to launch a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor? Staunton's Rear Admiral William Jackson Galbraith provided an answer.

By Daniel A. Métraux

***Editor's note:** Associate Editor Daniel A. Métraux always finds a way to bring a hidden gem of local history to light in the pages of the Bulletin. In this case he has paired that story with his own expertise in Asian history. Thanks Dr. Métraux.*

Japan's ability to launch a surprise attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, has always been one of the greatest questions in American history. Japan sent a large armada of aircraft carriers and battle ships across the northern Pacific completely undetected and launched a devastating attack that destroyed a good proportion of the American naval fleet in the Pacific. How and why the Japanese were able to pull off this vicious assault has always puzzled me. When I asked retired Rear Admiral William Jackson Galbraith (1906-1994) at his residence in Staunton shortly before his death, he provided plausible answers that made the catastrophe at Pearl Harbor perfectly understandable.

Although I had studied Japanese history for many years and had spent over five years in Japan as a student and later a teacher, I was unable to get a rational answer to my most basic question, WHY did the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor and why they were able to make a successful surprise attack? When I heard about Admiral Galbraith, I went without any hesitation to his house and made an appointment for an interview. I was not to be disappointed. Galbraith very patiently gave me his take on Pearl Harbor as well as his life in Japan as a prisoner of war.

Galbraith was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1906 and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1929. He led an active and successful career both as a naval officer and as an Olympic athlete who won a silver medal in gymnastics (rope climbing) at the 1932 Summer Olympics at Los Angeles. He quickly became a high-ranking naval officer, a prisoner

Mr. William J. Galbraith . . .  
 serenity, equity, dignity . . . patience  
 personified . . . logical . . . sudden,  
 unexpected smile . . .



*William Galbraith's entry in the Mary Baldwin yearbook.*

of war in Japan, and finally a math professor at Mary Baldwin College. He became chief gunnery officer in 1940 aboard the heavy cruiser *USS Houston*, which was sunk when it finally ran out of ammunition in a single-handed night battle with a Japanese invasion fleet off the coast of Java in early 1942. One of the ship's few surviving officers, Galbraith served out the rest of WWII as a prisoner of war, much of it in solitary confinement in Japan.

Galbraith, during a post-war naval career, which extended from the late 1940s through the early 1960s, held numerous commands including, as commodore, an amphibious squadron and an amphibious group in the Pacific. He also served as chief of staff, Western Sea Frontier, and was defense attaché to Oslo, Norway. He was also on the staff of the Naval War College. Among his decorations, which include the Silver Star, the Bronze Star and the Presidential Unit Citation, is

War in the United States started on Dec. 7, 1941, when Japanese aircraft bombed Pearl Harbor, which triggered the entry of the United States into the war.

# Retired Navy Admiral Recalls Prisoner Days

The rising sun on Aug. 14, 1942, signaled the start of just another day for one Staunton man.

The setting of the sun that same day had no effect on Admiral Galbraith. He was a prisoner of war.

Admiral Galbraith, the day would be 11 months in the Pacific. He was just another day of a prisoner of war.

The path would have been particularly the one along of the 300 POWs at Boko.

Admiral Galbraith's memories of the time were not as clear as the one in the winter of 1942.

Admiral Galbraith's memories of the time were not as clear as the one in the winter of 1942.

On Aug. 14, 1942, Admiral Galbraith's memories of the time were not as clear as the one in the winter of 1942.

Admiral Galbraith's memories of the time were not as clear as the one in the winter of 1942.

Admiral Galbraith's memories of the time were not as clear as the one in the winter of 1942.

The commandant stopped talking. The new prisoner spoke.

Admiral Galbraith's memories of the time were not as clear as the one in the winter of 1942.

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In the winter of 1942, Admiral Galbraith's memories of the time were not as clear as the one in the winter of 1942.

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Admiral Galbraith's memories of the time were not as clear as the one in the winter of 1942.

## War Crimes Trial Verdict Due Soon

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On the next day, the people of a nearby village sent some children to the camp and school children brought water and supplies.

That night, they offered comfort. The Japanese were not as cruel as the Americans.

In the mid-1940s, the Japanese were not as cruel as the Americans. The Japanese were not as cruel as the Americans.

Other day stations for food. The Japanese were not as cruel as the Americans. The Japanese were not as cruel as the Americans.

Admiral Galbraith's memories of the time were not as clear as the one in the winter of 1942. The Japanese were not as cruel as the Americans.

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The story of Admiral Galbraith's time as a Japanese prisoner of war was featured in the Staunton News Leader on August 15, 1968.

The Order of Orange Nassau, the highest military honor awarded by the Dutch government.

Upon retirement from the Navy, Galbraith earned an advanced degree from Duke University and served on that university's staff for one year before moving to Staunton in 1961 with his wife Grace, where he spent the next twelve years as an associate professor at Mary Baldwin College.

When I interviewed Admiral Galbraith in the early 1990s at his home on East Beverley Street in Staunton, I asked him why he thought the Japanese were able to pull off a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. He replied:

I was chief gunnery officer on the USS Houston based in Manila in the Philippines in the autumn of 1941. We knew that war with Japan was coming and coming very soon. President Roosevelt's decision months earlier to cut off sales of petroleum to Japan put the Japanese in a difficult situation. They would not be able to wage more war in China if they ran out of petroleum, so they had to make

a choice—surrender their military empire in China and Korea or invade Southeast Asia to seize the oil riches of the Dutch East Indies [today Indonesia].

Galbraith noted that Japan would have to make war on the Americans in the Philippines, the British in Singapore and Hong Kong, the French in what is now Vietnam, and the Dutch in the East Indies if they were going to get oil. American intelligence had broken Japanese messages throughout their military and had ascertained that an attack on the Philippines and Southeast Asia was coming soon. “We were on a full war alert as of Thanksgiving 1941 with the full expectation that we would be fully engaged in a conflict with Japan by the first week of December,” he said.

When I asked Admiral Galbraith if he could summarize the reasons for the Pearl Harbor attack, he replied, “Like so many of our wars today, the major cause was OIL.” Access to oil was critical for the Japanese. Until 1940, they had bought their oil from the United States, but when the Americans stopped selling their oil, the Japanese felt they had no choice but to seize the oil riches of Southeast Asia.

Galbraith stressed the fact that the American military paid great attention to Japan’s imminent attack on Manila, which in fact did occur on December 7 just as Galbraith and his colleagues had expected. The problem was that because everybody expected and was planning for an invasion to the south, it never occurred to American military planners that the Japanese would also cross the northern Pacific Ocean to launch an attack on Hawaii.

“They were so focused on an attack happening in one place that they shut their eyes to possibilities of conflict elsewhere. It was a massive failure of American intelligence. Pearl Harbor was seen as being beyond the range and capacity of the Japanese military. That attack was made so that American ships would not be able to stop the Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia,” he explained.

Galbraith added that the Americans and British had also badly underestimated the capabilities of the Japanese military. Their air force was vastly superior to those of the West and their capacity to launch torpedoes from far away was a major surprise to the American military. The crew of the *USS Houston* fought valiantly in December and January against the Japanese drive to the East Indies, but by February 1942, the *SS Houston* ran



out of ammunition and fell prey to incessant bombing by the Japanese air force, The ship finally sank taking most of its crew with it. Galbraith was reluctant to talk about his struggle to stay alive, but another source tells the story which would make for a great movie thriller:

Following the sinking of USS *Houston*, Lieutenant Commander Galbraith endured eight hours in heavy seas until he managed to reach the beach at Java. There he was taken prisoner by the Japanese. His capture was made worse by the brutality which he received at the hands of the Japanese. Galbraith's treatment was much more merciless because of his attempts to have his crew treated less severely. He was imprisoned on the island of Java for five weeks under conditions that caused most of the men confined with him to become seriously ill. Galbraith remained a prisoner of war (POW) for the remainder of the war, facing uncertainty, a lengthy bout with pneumonia, and eventual transfer to other POW camps in Japan. He and the other British and American prisoners watched their weight go down as their risk of illness or death increased due to malnutrition and the unsanitary conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Galbraith kept a daily diary of his life as a POW in Japan for the duration of the war. He had to endure severe hardship including eight months in dreadful solitary confinement, He was badly fed and had continual stomach aches. Worst of all were the severe beatings inflicted on him by his Japanese captors. Whenever he got up. he felt sharp pains in his head due to these beatings. Galbraith summarized his time in Japan by likening his status as that of a badly maligned and ill-fed dog.<sup>2</sup>

Despite his harsh experiences as a prisoner of war, Galbraith showed no bitterness toward Japan during our interview. He refused to blame the ordinary Japanese soldier or citizen who was living under a harsh military dictatorship that showed utter contempt for human life. He recalled moments of kindness from guards and other lower functionaries who treated him well when their officers were out of view. Later when I told Galbraith that I was planning to lead a class at Mary Baldwin for the general public, focusing on Japanese culture and language in the early 1990s, Galbraith and his wife Grace came to every session and participated

enthusiastically in class discussions. When I asked him why he came to this class, he smiled and said, “We will never achieve true world peace until we come to respect and understand our adversaries.” The class was Galbraith’s attempt to come to terms with the nation and people who had treated him so badly.

**Author’s note:** My own position as Professor of Asian Studies at Mary Baldwin College (1983-2020) came about as a special goal of former MBC Dean Irene Hecht. Dean Hecht as a young girl and her family had been interned in a Japanese POW camp in the Philippines for the duration of the war. Hecht wanted to make a gesture to increase cultural understanding between the U.S. and Japan.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/manuscripts/g/rear-admiral-william-j-galbraith-usn-ret-an-inventory-of-his-collection-in-the-navy-department-library.html> (acquired 4 July 2021)

<sup>2</sup> “Retired Navy Admiral Recalls Prisoner Days,” Interview with the Staunton *Daily News Leader*, August 15, 1965.

# The Country Store and Crawford & Wilberger, General Merchandise

By Nancy Sorrells

***Editor's Note:** In 2020, historian and ACHS President Nancy Sorrells was commissioned to write the interpretive panel text for a small exhibit at the Brownsburg Museum in neighboring Rockbridge County. That text for "Cradle to Coffin: Remembering the Country Store," comprises the first portion of this article. In 2021, the Society received a donation consisting of several hundred accounting documents, such as receipts and invoices, from the Crawford & Wilberger general store in New Hope in northern Augusta County. As she sorted and organized the box of papers from the New Hope store, she was struck with just how much the papers from this specific store rang true with the more generalized text that she composed for the Brownsburg museum exhibit that featured Rockbridge County and Augusta County country stores.*

*The first part of this article consists of the panel text and some images from the museum exhibit. The second half includes some history of the New Hope store as well as some information that can be gleaned from a quick perusal of the collection. A note on sources can be found at the end of this article.*

## **Remembering the Country Store**

### **The Country Store had it all!**

Was there life before the Internet? Today's youth don't realize that from the frontier days until the middle of the twentieth century, Americans had an "internet"—they called it the country store—that connected them to the world. Although local mercantile establishments have almost disappeared, at one time they symbolized the heart of the community; places where folks of every age, race, and gender could purchase anything they needed, literally, from birth to death.

Not only could Americans buy what they desired at the general store, but they could also sell products—such as eggs, butter, furs, and



*A country store in Sampson located in northeastern Augusta County.  
(ACHS Collections)*

ginseng. A visit to the store meant picking up mail, hearing juicy gossip; playing checkers while discussing politics; and buying a pound of sugar, a schoolbook, a hat, a tobacco plug, or a packet of garden seeds.

The country store was sensory overload: shelves and counters jammed to overflowing; a kaleidoscope of colorful advertisements vying for attention; baskets and buckets dangling from the ceiling, and clothing fluttering from lines strung hither and yon. Scents exuding from barrels of molasses, kerosene, and vinegar mingled with hints of spices, tobacco, roasting coffee beans, and smoke from a pot-bellied stove to produce a powerfully pungent atmosphere.

## **Peddlers with Pins**

### **Become Country Stores**

In the early 1700s, the Shenandoah Valley was a wild, western frontier. Despite backcountry remoteness, however, those first settlements never existed as isolated subsistence communities. From the beginning, Valley settlers established commercial ties to colonial seaboard cities, especially Philadelphia, as an outlet for their products. In return, peddlers, traveling by foot or leading pack animals, followed narrow footpaths into the backcountry to hawk their wares—small items like pins, needles, spoons, spices, buttons, and combs. The scarcity of currency meant early peddlers often bartered, trading their finery for furs and textiles that could be taken back and sold.





*The interior of a general store in Augusta County. Note that it was crammed full of products. (ACHS Collections)*

Footpaths gradually widened into rough roads and soon peddlers plied their trade by cart, offering larger items and greater variety. Traveling merchants quickly put down roots in the Valley adding a simple showroom in their house for sales goods. The first known permanent store in Staunton appeared in 1748.

By the early 1800s, single rooms of trade goods expanded into thriving businesses where almost anything could be bought and sold. In order to stock their shelves, merchants made seasonal trips to the big cities—initially Philadelphia, but then Baltimore, Richmond, and even New York City—to bring the world to their customers. Upon return, flashy newspaper advertisements announced the arrival of new inventory.

So integral were these businesses to rural communities that often a village sprang up around a store rather than a store locating in a village. By the mid-1800s there were 2,736 retail stores in Virginia, the majority being country stores.

### **Everything under One Roof**

Today one would have to traipse through an entire shopping mall and more to get through the list of chores that could be accomplished in one visit to the general store. The reason these country retail outlets were

referred to as “general” was because most shopkeepers preferred to generalize rather than specialize aiming to meet all the needs of all the people all the time.

Providing a variety of the world’s merchandise under one roof was the primary purpose of the store. Inventory equaled what today would be found in many separate and widely-scattered stores — a clothing store, department store, hardware store, grocery store, pharmacy, and feed store to name just a few. The shopkeeper kept close watch over the seasons, stocking garden seeds in the spring, firecrackers on the Fourth of July, new textbooks when schools opened, and toys to help Santa fill his sleigh at Christmas.

Storekeepers also served as an outlet for local goods produced or collected from nearby farms and forests. Eggs, butter, meat, furs, wild game, ginseng, garden produce, and various nuts were among the many items bought and bartered for by local merchants. Most of the trade goods went to the big cities to be used as leverage on buying trips.

More often than not, the store also doubled as the post office with the shopkeeper doubling as postmaster. Mail could be picked up and sent off to faraway places at the postal window located in the store. In the spring, boxes of peeping mail order chicks destined for the country barnyard made their way through the same postal window.

And, finally, perhaps the biggest service of a country store besides the actual movement of merchandise, was that it functioned as the community bank. Shopkeepers were often the most literate people in the community and their mercantile establishment was one of the few places with a steady flow of cash and long-term credit.

### **“Buy, Barter, Credit, Debit”**

#### **The Economics of the Country Store**

If the country store served as the financial institution for rural communities, then the storekeeper was the community capitalist. His store functioned as a retail outlet, but he often bought as much as he sold. Much of what he bought was then sold to city merchants to finance buying trips to bring inventory back to his store.

Amazingly, most transactions were cashless. Between two-thirds and three-quarters of country store sales were on credit. Credit extended for a year with everything totaled and settled after harvest. Stores totaled accounts in December, did inventory in February, and took spring buying trips to restock. Buying trips also involved a line of credit with urban merchants.



*The recreated country store at the Brownsburg Museum.*

Many store transactions were through barter, often preferred by shopkeepers because they could finance their buying trips by selling to city merchants. Although eggs and butter topped the barter list, merchants accepted almost anything. One Rockbridge storekeeper in Denmark purchased chestnuts, hickory nuts, and ginseng, which he then sold in NYC. "COUNTRY PRODUCE of every kind and description, taken in payments of debts and exchange for Goods at the highest market price," advertised one Valley store.

The system revolved around complicated accounting and record-keeping. Stores kept multiple ledgers, to record daily sales and itemize individual's debits (purchases) and credits (items sold or bartered).

Very little cash changed hands, but what cash there was resided in the store. Shopkeepers advanced "mini-loans" to customers for immediate needs such as circus tickets or bill payments. With the arrival of the Depression, stores became the place to cash government relief checks. It certainly behooved the shopkeeper to provide such financial services because a portion usually wound up back in the store. Some stores even issued their own script, another good insurance policy to boost sales!

### **The Country Store: A Lesson in Geography**

*"Thread, Lace to Cotton Bagging*

*A piece of tape to a piece of broadcloth,*

*Or from a needle to an Anvil,*

*Come and see me, and you can find it."*

The above 1841 advertisement from a southern shopkeeper was no exaggeration. As amazing as it seems, the country store of the past routinely brought goods from around the world to remote rural areas. The global connection was so profound that one teacher in the 1820s used a woodcut of a country store to teach geography lessons in which students could identify products from twenty-five countries on four continents. Decades later, a bookmark, given to customers by a store in Denmark (Rockbridge County), boasted of bringing in goods from four U.S. states as well as Canada, England, and Australia.

Not only did stores offer natural products, such as molasses, tea, and coffee, from around the world, but manufactured goods, such as linen and cotton textiles, china, and linens and lace, also spilled from the shelves. Merchants bragged that they could meet every need of every





such as a note from Mrs. J.J. Harvey in Lofton in southern Augusta County, survived. On Oct. 26, 1939, she sent a note to the store requesting a box of snuff, a dozen eggs, 3 quarts of oil, fly spray, a can of beef, butter, and bread. The final cost?...82 cents!

When shoppers made a purchase, the store clerk pulled a square of brown paper off a roll to wrap the item and tie string around it. Calculations to determine price were often made directly on the paper. Thus a customer would purchase "a paper of nails" or "a paper of pepper." A machine that made paper bags by cutting paper, folding and dampening the edges, and sealing with flour paste was invented just after the Civil War, but it took time to perfect and even more time before shopkeepers embraced the idea. Even after the transition to small bags, the customer still placed multiple bags and papers into a large handbasket rather than a shopping bag or cart.

Oct 26, 1939

	10
Mrs. Ramsey	12
and me	25
	25
bot snuff.	10
1 doz eggs.	<u>82</u>
3 quarts oil.	
fly spray.	
can beef	
butter	
bread	
Mrs. J.J. Harvey	

A note from Mrs. J.J. Harvey in Lofton in southern Augusta County, dated Oct. 26, 1939, requests a box of snuff, a dozen eggs, three quarts of oil, fly spray, a can of beef, butter, and bread from the Lofton store. The total amount was eighty-two cents. (ACHS collections)

Another change crept into the store in its twilight years—the cash register. Like the bag, this Ohio invention took years to perfect, and was also quite expensive. By the early 1900s, however, the register replaced ledgers in many stores.

### **Brand loyalty developed at the country store**

Until the late 1800s, customers walking into a store had no choice of brands—the shopkeeper cut a wedge from the cheese wheel, scooped coffee beans from a sack, and pumped kerosene from a barrel. Each individualized purchase was weighed or measured by the clerk who calculated the cost, wrapped the purchase in brown paper, and tied it with string.

Several vastly different products, all offered in the country store, broke from generic bulk sales, changing everything and setting in motion a world of competing brands. In 1898, the National Biscuit Company (NABISCO) began packing crackers in family-size, moisture-proof packages eliminating stale crackers pulled from giant barrels. The Kraft Company followed with pre-packaged cheese that spelled doom for the cheese wheel.

Even earlier than crackers and cheese, however, were prepackaged garden seeds, sought after by farmwives. Briggs Brothers offered seeds



*Advertisements for various brands are festooned on a line above the merchandise in this Craigsville store in Augusta County. (ACHS Collections)*




in colorful individualized packages before the Civil War and other companies followed suit.

Capitalizing on America's love of tobacco—for chewing and smoking—companies took advertising and packaging to new highs. At one time there were an incredible 12,000 tobacco brands for chewing and 9,000 brands for smoking! Competition among brands was fierce, generating catchy advertisements, gimmicks, and giveaways to entice customers to choose the “right brand.”

By the early 1900s the country store was ablaze with color advertising, labels, and signs. Many brands were sold out of their own colorful display cases, such as Clark O.N.T. (Our New Thread) where wooden spools wrapped in colorful threads were arranged in sliding drawers.

### “Good for What Ails You”

Country life of bygone days was not as blissful as we might remember. In an age before a thorough understanding of diseases, people were treated at home for sickness and injury. And, while a doctor might or might not have been involved in any medical care, the general store almost always played a role.



TRADE MARK  
(REGISTERED.)

## HITE'S PAIN CURE.

### The Great National Remedy.

### What It Is! What It Does!

This remarkable household preparation cures diseases of the most painful and dangerous character after all other means have failed, because it is made from the highest order and purest quality of Vegetable Germicides and Antiseptics, which are medicines that kill the germs of disease and prevent Gangrene (mortification), Erysipelas, Lockjaw and Blood Poison which very often result from flesh wounds.

**It is the only remedy ever discovered which immediately begins to heal all cuts, wounds, burns and sores on man and animals and without mattering, pain or soreness, and is the only Internal and External Vegetable Germicide and Antiseptic Liniment made. Endorsed by leading physicians. Warranted safe, reliable and free from opium, narcotics and all other injurious drugs.**

Cures Pains, Cramp, Flux, Diarrhoea, Cholera Morbus, Colic, Neuralgia, Head and Toothache, Insect Stings, Snake and Spider Bites, Cuts, Sprains and Bruises on man and animals, and Colic in horses and cattle. Use it for Colds, Coughs, Bronchitis, and all other affections of the throat and lungs. It kills the germs of Diphtheria, Croup, Scarlet Fever, Tonsilitis and La-Grippe, and for such it has proved almost an infallible remedy. This wonderful vitalizer saves life in the last stages of Pneumonia, Exhaustion from Fevers and other causes of heart failure when applied over the heart, temples and base of the brain and spine between the shoulders, the location of the nerves which control these vital organs, and is equally beneficial in Spinal Meningitis, Paralysis, etc. Its value in these afflictions cannot be overestimated. It has stood the test for more than 30 years.

**Do not accept any substitute. There is only one Pain Cure—"HITE'S."**

**MANUFACTURED ONLY BY DR. S. P. HITE, STAUNTON, VIRGINIA.**  
SOLD BY ALL DRUGGISTS—25 AND 50 CENT BOTTLES.

*Hite's Pain Cure, seen in this 1901 advertisement in the Staunton newspaper, had its roots in southern Augusta County and in Staunton.*



The first brand names to make their way to country store shelves in large quantities were ready-made remedies called “patent medicines.” These unregulated concoctions were “guaranteed” to cure everything that ailed both people and farm animals. These pills, powders, syrups, salves, and elixirs were secret, patented, recipes that often contained significant amounts of alcohol and other narcotics that are tightly regulated today.

Patent medicines were heavily marketed through traveling salesmen and retail outlets, such as country stores, by way of newspaper advertisements. At one time in America there were more than 3,000 medicine makers hawking more than 10,000 different products, all with colorful labels containing outrageous claims for cures.

Area stores most certainly would have carried “Doctor” Samuel P. Hite’s Pain Cure for Man and Beast. Hite’s elixir could be used as a liniment or ingested. Hite started making his product in southern Augusta County before opening a laboratory in Staunton in 1887. In addition to containing sixty-five percent alcohol, Hite’s potion contained camphor, ammonia, turpentine, and various herbs!

### **Jim Crow & the Country Store**

While it was true that the country store had something for everyone, that didn’t mean that everyone’s experience at the store was identical. For African Americans in the Valley, country stores were often just another part of the inequity experienced in the Jim Crow South, an era in the former Confederacy where blacks were treated, by law and tradition, as second-class citizens.

Just as African Americans were made to sit at the back of the bus or in the theater gallery, they also often received discriminatory treatment at the country store. Although stores were some of the few places that saw whites and blacks in close contact with each other, some shopkeepers made it a practice to serve white customers first and often sold inferior products to black customers. Stories abound of clerks who overcharged, but any objections to such unscrupulous behavior were not tolerated. There are also stories of shopkeepers who treated everyone in their store fairly regardless of race, gender, or social status.

In Rockbridge, on the eve of the Civil War, 25% of the population was enslaved and yet even many of those individuals show up in store ledgers as making purchases. After the war, African Americans often had no choice but to patronize white-owned country stores, and the



*An African-American man in Middlebrook is among those who posed for this photograph at H.G. McGary & Co.'s store in the village.*

numbers of black customers increased exponentially until very early in the twentieth century when the area's black population decreased substantially. There were some black-owned shops in larger towns like Lexington and Staunton, but not many in the rural areas.

Ironically, the great equalizer for the black population came in the rise of "color-blind" mail order catalogs like Sears and Roebuck, where no one knew the customer's race. African Americans could order nice items from catalogs that were considered "too high falutin" for them to purchase in a store. Apparently threatened by this egalitarian competition, some Southern store owners circulated rumors that Mr. Sears and Mr. Roebuck were black men, forcing the company founders to publish photographs of themselves.

### **Fading Memories: The Country Store's Demise**

The period from the 1850s to the 1890s marked the zenith of the country store. Roads, railroads, and ships brought the products of the world into the homes of America via the country store.

But, by the 1880s competition loomed on the horizon in the form of mail order catalogs, ironically delivered to rural America through the post office window of the rural store. In 1888, businessman Richard Sears printed a mailer to advertise his watches. By 1894 the Sears, Roebuck and Co.'s "Book of Bargains" featuring the "Cheapest Supply House on Earth," was well on its way to making the general store obsolete.

Catalogs, however, were not the only villains. It took consolidated chain stores and the automobile to finish off what the mail order catalog started. The Great Depression, from 1929 to 1941, provided the final nail in the coffin for many businesses, including country stores.

In rural Shenandoah Valley, vestiges of country stores lingered into modern memory, but they were mere shadows of the community heartbeat they once were. Encouragingly, a few country stores, such as the Middlebrook General Store in southern Augusta County, have reopened their doors. Most that remain, however, stand as abandoned, weathered reminders of a bygone era.

### **1918 Pandemic Touched Everyone**

Imagine the life expectancy of Americans dropping by twelve years in one year. That's exactly what happened in 1918, the year of the deadliest pandemic in recorded human history. A virus traveled the globe that year, taking more than fifty million lives (as compared to thirteen million who died in WWI). As many as 600,000 of those deaths were in the United States, many coming in late September and October just as the war drew to close.

No community was immune to the microscopic enemy that was deadliest to the healthiest—forty-five percent of those who perished were between fifteen and thirty-five. In Rockbridge and Augusta counties, flu raged unchecked by early October and local authorities ordered a lockdown. Church pews and streets were empty; schools and theaters were closed. People were warned to avoid gatherings of any sort.

How were country stores affected by the 1918 pandemic? Certainly the normal community gatherings synonymous with the stores were abandoned as desperate people did anything they could to avoid getting sick.

Even merchandise sales were affected. Helpless public officials banned the sale of soft drinks for fear of spreading the disease. But patent medicine sales skyrocketed as the pandemic came during the patent medicine heyday. A panicked population turned to potions and "medicines" found in great quantity in local stores. There were

formaldehyde candles to burn for fumigation purposes and tonics to prevent influenza. Capsules and syrups promised cures but, in reality did little good and might even have been worse than getting the flu; one concoction in Staunton had strychnine in it!

The deadliest week in American history came in the last week of October 1918 when 2,700 Americans died in battle and 21,000 civilians died on the homefront from influenza. By early November the worst was over; businesses like country stores returned to normal life although small influenza flare-ups continued for many months.

Of this tragic period in American history, one doctor who had lived through the 1918 flu pandemic poignantly noted: "The disease simply had its way. It came like a thief in the night and stole our treasure."

Crawford & Wilberger  
General Merchandise  
New Hope, Va.

**Crawford & Wilberger**  
**GENERAL MERCHANDISE**

*Crawford & Wilberger, General Merchandise, was the official business name of the New Hope Store.*

The roots of the village of New Hope, in northeastern Augusta County, go back to the country's earliest settlement. By the early twentieth century, the crossroads village was surrounded by prosperous farms making the store a hub for the flow of material goods from the store to the farm, and agricultural products from the farm to the store.

In 1906, C.D. Crawford and Robert Oda "Odie" Wilberger decided to open a general store in the middle of the village.<sup>1</sup> They contracted with Eutsler Brothers, a local contracting firm that built many structures in northern Augusta and southern Rockingham, to have a two-story structure built. Architecturally, the massive building is described as a two-story, three-bay, rectangular, frame building with a shed roof, recessed entry, and stick style false front. A frame side addition to house an expanding shoe business was added in the early 1920s.

Crawford died early in the business history,<sup>2</sup> but Wilberger carried on the operation under the same name. Local historian Owen Harner,



## --The men behind the store name--

<sup>1</sup>The Wilbergers were apparently quite the businessmen. Robert Oda "Odie" Wilberger's brother, William "Willie" Wilberger had already opened a funeral home in the village in 1892. The last funeral was conducted in 1979. Many of the funeral home records are also located in the Augusta County Historical Society archives, a donation from Betty Willberger Gruber.

After Willie Wilberger died, the funeral business was operated by his son Henry "Frank," who died in 1981, and Frank's son (Willie's grandson) James Odie, who died in 1968. (Information from the New Hope book by Wayne Garber and Owen Harner as well as Betty Willberger Gruber, the daughter of James Odie Willberger and the granddaughter of Willie Wilberger.)

Odie Wilberger, the co-founder of the general store, had no children so when he died he left everything to his great-nephew James Odie Willberger. That inheritance meant that Frank Willberger (Willie's son, Odie's nephew, and James Odie's father) and James Odie Willberger (Willie's grandson, Odie's great nephew, and Frank's son) ran both the store and the funeral home. Also instrumental in running the store was Frank's wife, Isabell Kennedy Willberger.)

An interesting side note as a part of this extensive family business involved the New Hope Telephone Company, one of the first telephone companies in the area. One of the first party lines went to the Wilberger businesses. One phone was at the store, one at the funeral home, one at the barn, and one at each of the two families' houses for a total of five phones. Because of the funeral home business, Frank Willberger made someone sit by a phone at all times so they would not miss a call.

Another note is that, although the store and the funeral home business were founded by Wilbergers that spelled their name with one "L", Frank Willberger changed the spelling of his surname to have two "Ls," thus the donor of this collection, his granddaughter Betty Willberger Gruber, spells her maiden name with two "Ls."

<sup>2</sup>C.D. Crawford is probably Charles David Crawford, born c. 1854 in Augusta County on the family farm of Bonnie Doon near Mt. Meridian (known as the Old Crawford homestead). He passed away on Dec. 29, 1909, at King's Daughters' Hospital in Staunton about two weeks after having undergone an operation. He is buried in the Mt. Horeb Church cemetery near Weyers Cave.



*The expansive but now empty interior of the Crawford & Wilberger store in 2021.*

who co-authored a book about New Hope, noted that a “spot check” of the merchandise variety indicated that the following items could be purchased from the store: dry goods, chicken and cow feed, motor oil, pitch forks, plow shares, soft drinks, hardware needs, hosiery, groceries, work shoes, dress shoes, a complete line of sewing equipment, and work and dress clothes for both men and women.

After the other original partner, Robert Odie Wilberger, passed away, the store was operated by Frank Willberger and his son James Odie. After more than seventy-five years of operation, the store closed in 1980.

### **The surviving records**

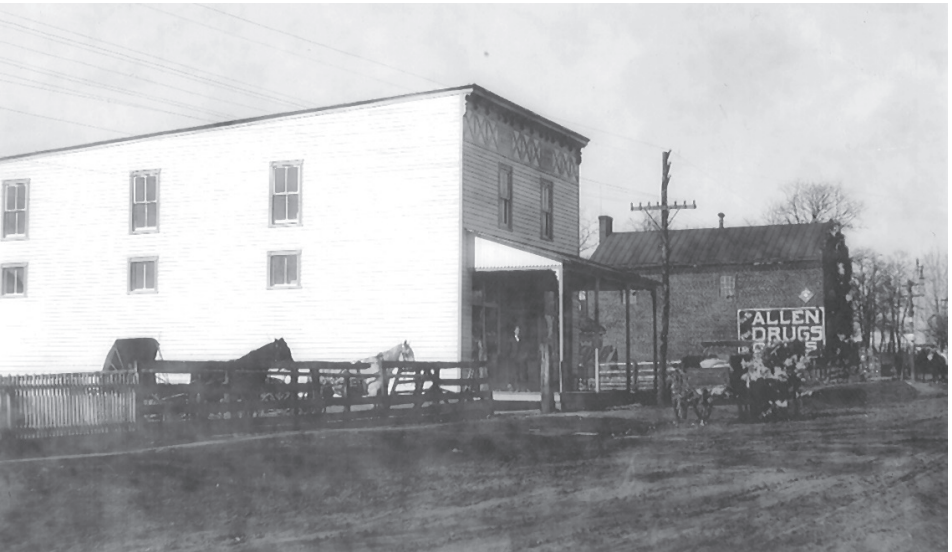
The box of general store records donated to the historical society clearly represents only a sample of the Crawford & Wilberger records. The donated records run from 1906-1939 and include wholesale purchases made by the New Hope store, shipments of agricultural produce that the store purchased from area farm families and then sent by rail to larger metropolitan areas (mostly chickens, eggs, and butter), as well as railroad shipping tickets. Together these records provide a comprehensive list of



*The Crawford & Wilberger store. top, was built in 1906. The bottom image of the store with the Firestone banner, dates to 1907. (Owen Harner images)*



*The west side (back) of the Crawford & Wilberger store, circa 1907. (Owen Harner)*



*The Crawford & Wilberger store, 1906. (Owen Harner)*



*This 1995 photo of the store shows the shoe shop that was added to the left side of the building in the early 1920s. (Owen Harner)*



these interconnected commercial ties, These three sets of records were, for the most part, stuck on three long pieces of wire. This crude but simple accounting system was probably also accompanied by ledger books, which are missing. There is also a bundle of pamphlets describing wholesale products that the store purchased. What is largely missing from this collection are the customer records. Nonetheless, the extant records provide a fascinating story of just how many connections and contacts a country store merchant had to maintain in order to operate a thriving rural mercantile. Further, a better understanding can be gained of just how reliant large urban areas were on country products. The key to the success of this national network was certainly a reliable railroad.



*The surviving records, consisting mostly of receipts, invoices, etc. that were jammed onto long metal wires, took some time to go through and organize. The bottom close-up photos shows how the store papers were organized via an accounting system that consisted of pushing each day's paperwork onto a series of metal wires.*

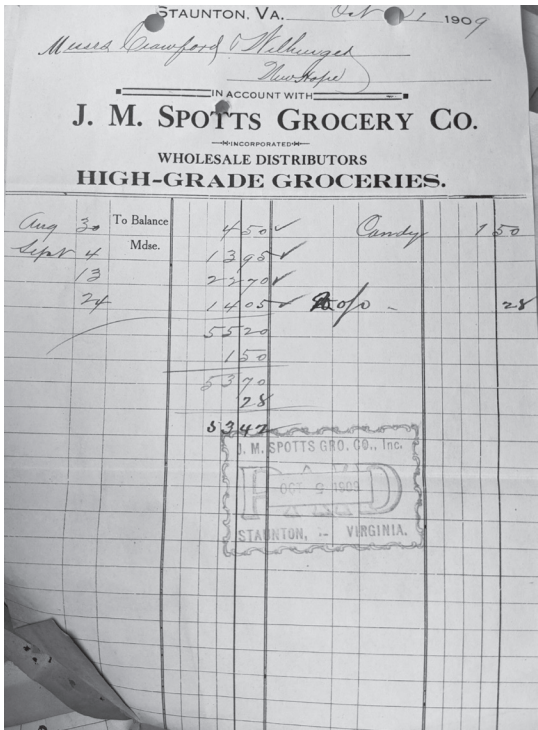
**Observations: Merchandise coming into New Hope**

Even the brief survey of the records that I completed provided a fascinating glimpse into those networks. Here are some takeaways. After looking through these records, the expansiveness of the store’s commercial network became apparent. Not only did this network have to be created by a merchant in order to maintain a well-stocked store, but it was surprising just how many of the wholesale merchants were local – in Staunton, Waynesboro, Augusta County, Bridgewater and Rockingham. Others were as far west as Chicago and up into New York.

In the period from 1909-1913 there were in excess of eighty merchants that Crawford and Wilberger relied upon to stock the store.

For wholesale groceries, for instance, the New Hope store relied on a wholesale grocer in Harrisonburg, one in New York City, several in Staunton, one in Baltimore, one in Minneapolis, and one in Luray (groceries and hardware).

Staunton's J. M. Spotts Grocery as well as H. Hutchinson & Co., both saw frequent purchases from New Hope. A.T. Higginbotham, whose “wholesale fruits, produce, etc.,” business was located on the wharf in downtown Staunton, supplied fresh fruits and vegetables to the store, including large quantities of bananas.



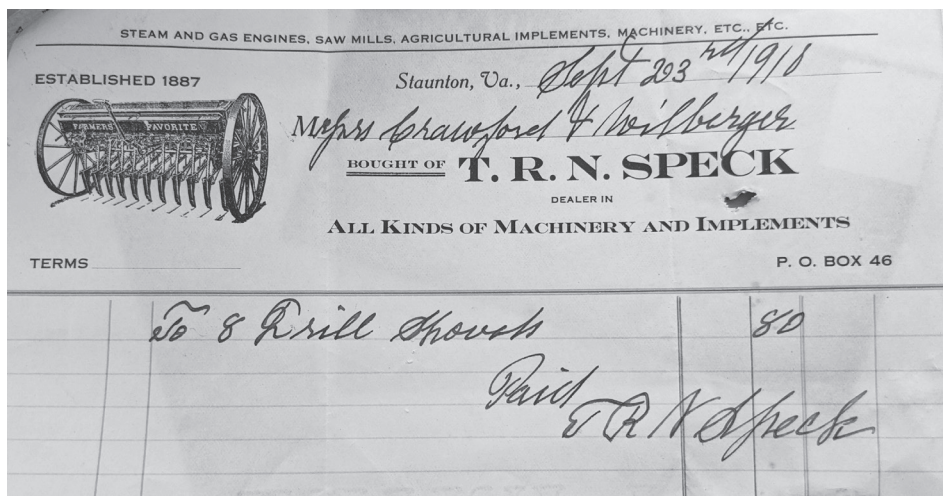
*J.M. Spotts Grocery Co. in Staunton frequently sold “high-grade groceries” at wholesale prices to the proprietors of Crawford & Wilberger.*

If it was a specialty food item, there were other places with which to make contact. The New Hope businessmen went to Baltimore for oysters and coffee, Staunton for sweets made by “wholesale confectioners,” and New York City for fine chocolates. Crackers, manufactured specifically by the National Biscuit Company (Nabisco), could be found in Staunton, but the New Hope merchants also went to Pittsburgh for cakes and crackers. Baltimore was where they found baking soda.

There was also food for the livestock. The Fort Defiance Milling Company supplied both flour and meal for human and animal consumption. It was only natural that in an area that once featured a grain mill of some sort every few miles that local milling contacts would be numerous. Other local mills that were among the Crawford & Wilberger wholesale suppliers were J.F. Drumheller in New Hope, Knightly Milling Company near Mt. Sidney, Hoy & Woodson Staunton Feed Mills in Staunton, and the Crimora Roller Mills.

J. S. EARLY.		STATEMENT.		H. G. EARLY.	
Fort Defiance, Va.,		Sept 1		1909	
M. Wilberger					
To Ft. Defiance Milling Co., Dr.					
MANUFACTURERS OF					
.....High Grade Valley Virginia Wheat Flour.....					
FEED AND MEAL OF ALL KINDS.					
Royal Patent and Drifted Snow Flour.					
Sept 1	To 174" offals				2.17
	To 210" Bran				2.62
					<u>\$4.79</u>
Pd.					

A 1909 receipt from the Fort Defiance Milling Co., for offals (the low grade product after flour has been produced) and bran.



*T.R.N. Speck of Staunton specialized in "all kinds of machinery and implements."*

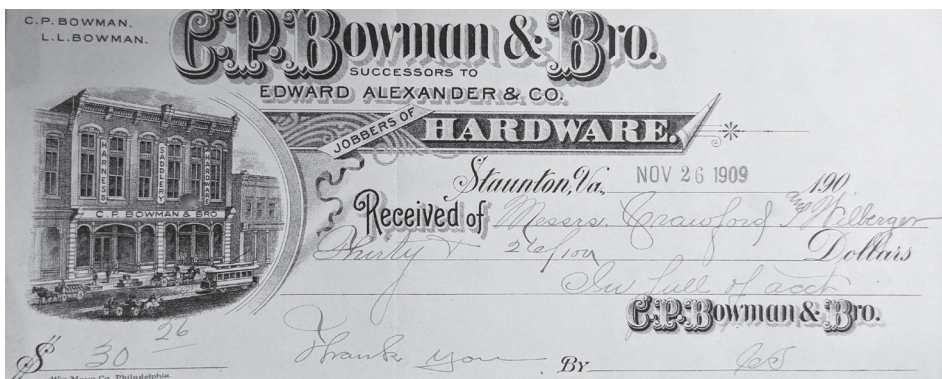
The wide geographic range of Crawford and Wilberger's commercial connections is impressive. Plows came from as close as nearby Bridgewater and Harrisonburg to far away places such as Cambridge, N.Y., while harvesters came from Batavia, N.Y., and drill shovels from Staunton (from T.R.N. Speck). Other agricultural needs came from near and far as well: lime from Riverton, Va., fertilizer and seeds from Niagara Falls, N.Y., and "Hay, Straw, Grain, Lumber, Seed and Fertilizers" arrived from Plaine, Koiner, & Co., in Crimora.

Shoes of all sorts—work, play, foul weather or fair—were also important products. In fact, the New Hope store made shoes a specialty and even added on a significant addition to order to accommodate the high volume of shoe business. Shoes came from Lynchburg, Va., Endicott, N.Y., Mishawaka, Indiana (lumbermen's socks and rubber footwear), Ohio, and Richmond.

Hardware was another genre of merchandise where the New Hope duo turned to a variety of dealers. There was Worthington Hardware in Staunton, but that establishment didn't have the corner on the market. C.P. Bowman & Bro. and J.P. Ast Hardware Company both in Staunton were regular suppliers of hardware as were firms in Washington, D.C., and Roanoke.

Other local businesses that helped keep the New Hope store's shelves stocked were Waynesboro's W.H. Riddle that supplied large quantities of brooms, and Staunton's Snyder & Sheets with the up-and-





The Staunton firm of C.P. Bowman & Bro., "Jobbers of Hardware," were regular suppliers for the shelves at the Crawford & Wilberger store.

WAYNESBORO, VA. Sep. 29 1909

Crawford & Wilberger

W. H. RIDDLE.

To **NET CASH** Dr.

**TERMS**

1	Doz. Brooms	#1	3	00
2	"	#0	5	00
			8-00	

By Cash & Goods 8-00

W.H. Riddle regularly supplied the New Hope store with "high grade brooms," in this case five dozen brooms were produced in Waynesboro and sold to Crawford & Wilberger.

coming businesses of electrical supplies and telephones. Surries, buggies, harness, and wagons were the specialty of Staunton's Neff & Clemmer, while tobacco and cigars came from the dealer named A.L. Livick.

Patent medicines as well as tried and true pharmaceuticals were the bread and butter of the country store. While some drugs did come from Staunton businesses, far and away the largest dealer on which Crawford & Wilberger depended was in Baltimore. Drugs as well as other items, came from the Baltimore Bargain House, known as "one of the Largest

Wholesale Houses in the United States.” Other suppliers of patent medicines were located in Syracuse, N.Y., Chicago, and Newport News. Of course, livestock also needed medical supplies and many of those veterinary needs came from Staunton.

A general store had to carry everything. Here’s a list of some of the other types of merchandise found at the New Hope store and the location of the dealers. Books and Stationary came from Staunton businesses, but pencils came from Baltimore and fountain pens came from New York City. Stoves and ranges came from Ironton, Ohio, and Baltimore. Clothing came from Shippensburg, Pa., Chicago, Waverley, Ohio (gloves and mittens), Richmond (hats), Roanoke (hats and gloves), Baltimore (straw hats), and Winchester (gloves).

Carriages came from Chicago, dry goods and notions from Richmond, soap from New York City, pumps and engines from Chicago, crocks from Richmond, chicken coops from Weyers Cave, pipes for smoking from Buffalo, N.Y., watch fobs from Chicago and watch repair was in New York City, trunks and bags from Richmond, dishes from Baltimore, wallpaper from New York City, and buggy whips came from Binghamton, N.Y.

Finally, one of the most important items for sale in the days before



*Small local merchants from around the country relied upon the Baltimore Bargain House to supply them with wares for their store shelves. From late November 1911 until early January 1913, Crawford & Wilberger spent \$203.34 in wholesale purchases at the establishment. That amount is equal to about \$6,593 in today's money.*

widespread electricity was lamp oil. Oil and gasoline for other types of engines was in great demand as well.

Products leaving New Hope

The amazing thing about country mercantile businesses is that they operated in both the wholesale and retail worlds. Of course they purchased wholesale products to sell on a retail basis, but they also purchased farm products from local families who brought those items into the store. Those farm products such as chickens, butter, and eggs, were then wholesaled by Crawford & Wilberger to large businesses in the big cities. One group of the Crawford & Wilberger papers (1907, 1909-1917) jammed on one of the wires dealt almost entirely in the selling and shipping of agricultural products: a variety of types of chickens including

L.S. WHITMORE ESTABLISHED 1893

**L. S. WHITMORE & CO.**

PRODUCE COMMISSION MERCHANTS

POULTRY EGGS BUTTER GRAIN

No. 22 S. THIRTEENTH ST. RICHMOND, VA.

Received *9/30* *316 Butter 98-18-75 #* *18¢* *1350*

For Account of *Crawford & Wilberger*

Telephone 1304 Post-Office Box 146

CHARGES:

FREIGHT EXPRESS *81* DRAYAGE *81*

EXPRESS ON RETURN EMPTIES

COMMISSION *68*

F & O. E.

NET SALES *146*

MEMBERS OF

Please find enclosed Check for \$ *7.01* We quote you to-day

Spring Chickens, per lb. *15-16* Hens, per lb. *10-11* Turkeys, per lb.

Ducks, per lb. *9-11* Dressed Turkeys, per lb. Dressed Chickens, per lb.

Dressed Fowl, per lb. Dressed Ducks, per lb. Dressed Geese, per lb.

Eggs, per dozen *23* Fresh Butter, per lb. *16-18* Common Grades, per lb.

Veals, per lb. *6-7* Lambs, per lb. Rabbits, each, Wild Turkeys, per lb.

Deer, per lb. Dressed Hogs, Small, per lb. Large, per lb. Sun-Dried

per lb. *7/4* Common, per lb. *7* Ship us again

Yours truly,

L. S. WHITMORE

PRODUCE COMMISSION CO.

The merchants at Crawford & Wilberger had a brisk business of purchasing butter from local farm families and selling it to dealers in the big cities. This ticket shows that the Richmond firm of L.W. Whitmore & Co., purchased seventy-five pounds of butter and paid eighteen cents a pound for it.



hens, roosters, and young chicks; butter, eggs, and occasionally ducks, guinea fowl, rabbits, and even black walnut kernels were all purchased by the store in order to resell.

Crawford & Wilberger had regular buyers in Richmond, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, Milnesville, Va., and even more locally such as in Harrisonburg or Weyers Cave, where the Wrenn Brothers purchased “all kinds of country produce.”

No matter where the final destination was for the country produce sold by Crawford & Wilberger, it almost certainly left New Hope by rail. The final group of papers represents rail receipts from the early twentieth century until 1939. Far and away most of the rail tickets are from the Baltimore & Ohio, but other rail lines, including the Norfolk & Western, and the Chesapeake & Ohio are represented.

There is much more to be learned about community and commercial connections associated with the Crawford & Wilberger store in New Hope, Va. Hopefully, there is something here right now that has tickled your fancy.

**Sources:** The genesis of this work lies in a report on general stores researched and written by Nancy Sorrells and Linda Petzke at the Museum of American Frontier Culture in 1990. Sorrells was the museum’s research historian and Petzke was the education director. Together they looked at a number of Valley of Virginia general store ledgers as well as period newspapers.

#### **Published sources included:**

Atherton, Lewis E. *The Southern Country Store, 1800-1860*. Baton Rouge, La., State University Press, 1949.

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Clark, Thomas D. *Pills, Petticoats and Plows*. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1944.

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# Virtual Accessibility through SHARP Funding

***Editor's Note:** The Augusta County Historical Society is excited to be plunging full force into the virtual age. Read on for our exciting news in this article and the two that follow.*

In late 2021, the Augusta County Historical Society received a \$17,000 grant to begin digitizing its vast collections and create better virtual access. The grant comes from the National Endowment for the Humanities program known as "Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan (SHARP)", and provides funds to non-profit organizations to aid in revitalization from the pandemic. The funding, which is administered through Virginia Humanities, will be used to continue making the Society's collections accessible through digitization and virtual pathways. This will be a natural extension of the work already being undertaken by the Society's part-time historian, Josh Howard, that has been focused on the digital technology and virtual access of the Society's collections.

Howard, who has been working for the Society since May of 2021, will be heading up the project. He has extensive experience in collections and technology management and holds a PhD in public history, an MA in history, and an MS in statistics.

Under Howard's guidance, ACHS has already become one of the newest member organizations of the Virginia Heritage project ([vaheritage.org](http://vaheritage.org)). Virginia Heritage is a consolidated database that provides information about the vast array of manuscripts and archival materials housed in historical societies, libraries, museums, colleges and universities across Virginia and West Virginia. The project began in 1997 as a Virtual Library of Virginia initiative and has grown to nearly fifty member institutions today.

Virginia Heritage is an online repository for archival Finding Aids. This tool is perhaps the one digital resource most heavily used by those researching Virginia history, so it is a windfall to have ACHS's collections alongside larger institutions like the University of Virginia, the Library of Virginia, and Virginia Tech. Just think about how many more people can discover, for example, the depth of the Hamrick collection or the Dejarnette collection. Today, researchers would need someone to walk



*ACHS Historian Josh Howard and freelance historian Liz Catte, who has been hired as a part-time assistant to help Howard oversee the Augusta Community Portal project, study the technology that they will need in 2022 as they work on increasing virtual accessibility to the Society's archives.*

them through PastPerfect. In short order, researchers will be able to browse ACHS finding aids on their own time anywhere in the world that has an internet connection.

Howard will be assisted in the SHARP grant work by Liz Catte, who holds a PhD in public history, an MA in American history, and a BA in Latin. She brings a great deal of expertise to the project with her research and writing skills and past experience with digitization projects.

Howard and Catte are currently setting up the new scanning hardware and software for the project and creating a set of guidelines for the work that will take place throughout 2021. They will be assisted by a corps of Society volunteers who will be trained in the process that will be created for ACHS. An abridged version of the grant application follows. Showcased in the next two articles are examples of information that will now be possible through the SHARP funding.

## **Augusta Community Portal:**

### **Accessing the Past for Future Understanding**

The Augusta County Historical Society has an amazing collection of manuscripts, images, and objects from prehistory to the present. We have been working hard to organize and catalog this vast collection by inputting data into PastPerfect, a widely used museum software program. The pandemic provided a painful lesson that what we have created is not enough. A collection that cannot be visited, either in person or virtually, falls short of potential—items are preserved in perpetuity but not used to expand understanding of our rich and diverse story or create a better future by learning from our past.

The pandemic dealt a heavy blow to the Society as important programming and fundraising efforts were completely shut down for the better part of a year even as expenses continued. Without virtual access to our collection, the use of our records for research and understanding of our community's history nearly ceased. It is with these important pandemic lessons ringing in our ears that we created the **Augusta Community Portal**. Designed to find the silver linings from this past year, we will work to enhance important and successful old programs while seeking new ways to remain vibrant and relevant in a post-pandemic, more socially conscious world. It is our hope that the Augusta Community Portal will touch all facets of ACHS and be the driving force in our work as we move forward with our important mission.

The driving force behind integrating the Augusta Community Portal mentality into the fiber of the Society's work has resulted in an intense and renewed focus on our collection. Since its inception in 1964, the Society has actively collected paper ephemera, books, images, and three-dimensional objects that tell the rich story of an Augusta County that once stretched to the Mississippi River. The collection is carefully preserved in archival boxes located on ceiling-to-floor shelves in four-climate controlled rooms on the third floor of the beautifully restored R.R. Smith Center for History and Art in downtown Staunton, Va.

Much of the Augusta Community Portal focus will be on the increased vigor in which we seek to make this exceptional collection fully accessible to all, both in person and remotely. The collection is not static; it has always been a growing and expanding collection as new items continually contribute to a deeper, more personal, and inclusive understanding of the history of all groups within Augusta County. The

story is sometimes painful, but necessary, in our learning process. For instance, the organizational records of Staunton's Montgomery Hall Park are housed here. This important park, one of the few operated by and for African Americans in Virginia during the Jim Crow period, is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Other new acquisitions, such as a document describing the sale of an enslaved man, and a local LGBTQ group's organizational materials, will help us honestly confront the harsh reality and resilience of our history. In addition to a renewed focus on expanding our collections to reflect African American and LGBTQ groups, we also want to seek out materials from Native American, Hispanic, Asian, women, rural communities, and those who might have otherwise come from marginalized socio-economic groups traditionally underrepresented in the Augusta County story.

Expanding the scope and inclusiveness of the collection, while vital, is perhaps the easiest part of the story. Making that collection searchable and accessible is where this grant can accelerate a process that would otherwise take years to complete.

Our plan is as follows: 1. Hampering access to our collections is the fact that we do not yet have a complete digital catalog in PastPerfect and that complete catalog on the Society's computers is not searchable remotely. We have recently made great progress by hiring a part-time assistant archivist, Josh Howard, who is skilled in tech matters, history, and specifically with PastPerfect.

Our archivist works just fifteen hours a week and is often pulled from the computer to help visitors. In person visitation will only increase as remote researchers who find something of interest in our virtual catalog or on Virginia Heritage arrive to use the collections.

The Society finds itself in a frustrating position. The solution is to digitize the collections so that researchers can fully access the items of interest discovered in our catalog or through our finding aids. This eliminates much staff time needed to pull collections for in-person visitors. The added bonus is that this also builds organizational resiliency should we ever be faced with a situation similar to what we faced during the pandemic. Had our collections been searchable and accessible virtually, we could have been open to researchers without ever missing a beat. In addition, we would have offered a valuable service to many people who were confined to their homes and looking for a stimulating and safe outlet.

Our goal now is to expedite the virtual access by hiring more staff



and training volunteers to work on digital cataloging, digitization of records, and artifact photography, resulting in the creation of virtual access to our rich and diverse ACHS collection. Accomplishing this will also require some technological investment. We would need to expand our scanning equipment, purchase a laptop, and a good camera. Other necessary expenses include an annual subscription to PastPerfect for virtual access to our catalog as well as costs for other virtual platforms.

Through the Augusta Community Portal, we hope to organize and implement more community outreach, conduct public history days, and continue to strengthen our partnerships with diverse community groups in order to make our mission relevant to the current and future generations in our community.

# Digitizing 125-year-old data to uncover forgotten stories in Staunton Communities

By Oliver Dahl

**Editor's Note:** Sometimes the stars and the planets do align. In 2021, as work was proceeding on both the SHARP grant application and this very Bulletin, a young man seeking information contacted the Augusta County Historical Society. Oliver Dahl was trying to learn more about the urban renewal that had occurred in Staunton in the early 1960s in the downtown area defined by Frederick Street on the south and Central and North Augusta on the west and east. That misguided city planning project destroyed much of the business and residential community in those city blocks. A significant portion of what was lost consisted of African American businesses and homes.

Not only was Dahl interested in helping to learn about the vibrant communities and stories that were lost, but also it turns out that he has a skill set that can provide a tool that will be useful to the larger community effort in understanding and analyzing that painful period of the city's history and making sure that the full story is told. It turns out that Dahl is a whiz at computer science and technology, having earned a degree in that subject and is active in technology education.

Dahl recently joined the Society board with an eye toward helping transform historical data into modern datasets. On the ACHS library bookshelves sits an extensive collection of city directories filled with tidbits of information about Staunton and its communities through the years. This project, which will get a boost from the SHARP grant, is his first undertaking as a new board member. We at the Society are excited to have Dahl on board to help us use technology to add more tools in our toolbox—tools that will help us all gain a deeper and richer understanding of our community's past.

I visited the Augusta County Historical Society a few months ago to learn more about the urban renewal demolition of the downtown area in Staunton between Central and North Augusta Streets that occurred during the 1960s. While there, I discovered the collection of Staunton

city directories spanning over a third of the years between 1896 and the 1960s. I became interested in them because, unlike the U.S. Federal Census from the era, which I had considered consulting, these records were typed. Thus, they can be processed with optical character recognition more accurately than handwriting. In addition, unlike the census that provides a snapshot every ten years, the directories were produced every year. That frequency makes them three times more granular than the census. If a year-by-year set were collected, they would then be ten times more granular than the census. Finally, they include exact addresses, occupations, and up until the 1950s, it is also possible to discern a person's race by consulting the directories.

All these factors make the Staunton city directories prime candidates for being digitized into a dataset and used as a tool to better understand all of the city's history, including urban renewal.

The dataset would allow researchers to search for and then perform detailed analysis of historical demographic shifts in Staunton. The directories could become one more important tool to help us understand various historic shifts in the communities such as the social dynamics of the Great Depression, WWI and WWII, and the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s.

In late 2021, I completed a proof of concept with the first directory from 1896. At under four thousand entries, it is much shorter than those that follow, but it was a good place to start. I followed a three-phase process of digitization, data entry, and data cleaning. I outsourced steps to increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness. An excerpt of the original scans and some preliminary extractions of information follow.

As the data currently only exists for 1896, it is not yet possible to discover trends from the data. Yet, some interesting things can still be seen in the 1896 snapshot. For instance, a list of all of the surnames in Staunton in 1896 can be seen in a chart that has been created.

This data, when used by historians to complement their other analysis and work, will be quite useful when considering demographics of occupation, employers, locations, and ethnicity. A preliminary comparison of street and race, for instance, reveals an uneven distribution of Black and White residents within Staunton in 1896.

The areas of town where different people live can then be compared with the occupations that are prominent in that area as can be seen in a sample chart looking at concentrations of occupations in different areas

**The Dunsmore Business College** and Institute of Shorthand and Typewriting. Founded in 1874, and incorporated by the Legislature of Va. in 1884. More than 1600 former pupils holding positions of trust. G. G. Gooch, Pres. Board of Directors. J. G. Dunsmore, Pres. Faculty. 114 West Main Street, Staunton, Va.

STAUNTON DIRECTORY—WHITE DEPARTMENT.

33

# TURNER'S STAUNTON DIRECTORY

1896-97.

## STAUNTON—WHITE DEPARTMENT.

Acourt Herbert H. h Beverly Heights  
ADAMS EXPRESS CO., B. M. McCue agent, 113 W Main  
Agnor A. W. carpenter, h 109 N. Jefferson  
Airey I. W. carpenter, h 713 Maple av  
Airey Miss Sallie, seamstress, h 8 S. Augusta  
Akens Mrs. Jennie, wid, h 11 S. Washington  
Alfred Mrs. Minnie, wid, bds 17 N. Augusta  
Alexander Edward, (Edward Alexander & Co), h 309 Kalorama

**Atlas Insurance Agency,** Hoge & McChesney, Agents, Office Opera House, 112 East Main Street, Staunton, Va. Life, Fire and Accident Insurance, Security Bonds furnished, Lowest Rates.

Alexander Edward & Co. Hardware, etc, 15 S. Augusta  
Alexander George, painter, h 201 Stafford  
ALEXANDER J. A., (Alexander & Taylor) bds Hoover House  
ALEXANDER & TAYLOR, attorneys-at-law, 6 Lawyers Row  
Alexander Mrs. Sarah J. wid, h 309 Kalorama

J. A. ALEXANDER.

HERBERT J. TAYLOR.

# ALEXANDER & TAYLOR, ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW,

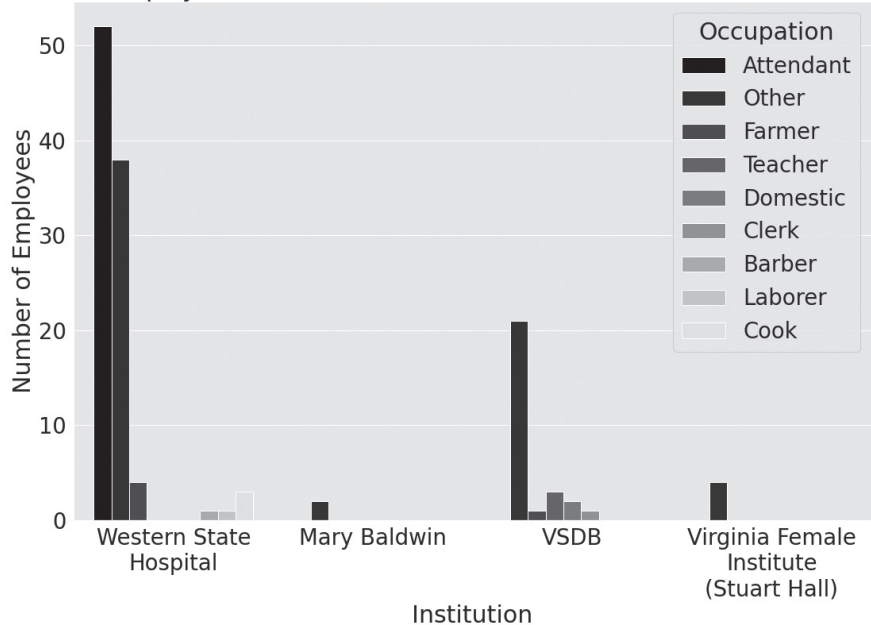
NO. 6 LAWYERS' ROW, STAUNTON, VA.

**Staunton Business College,** No. 8 North Central Avenue. INCORPORATED 1894. INDORSED by Chamber of Commerce 1895.  
B. F. HUMPHREYS, Principal and Manager, Post Office Drawer No. 6.

*Entries in the directory were one per line and were surrounded by ads at the top, center, and bottom of the page.*



Number of Employees at Different Roles at Prominent Institutions in 1896 Directory



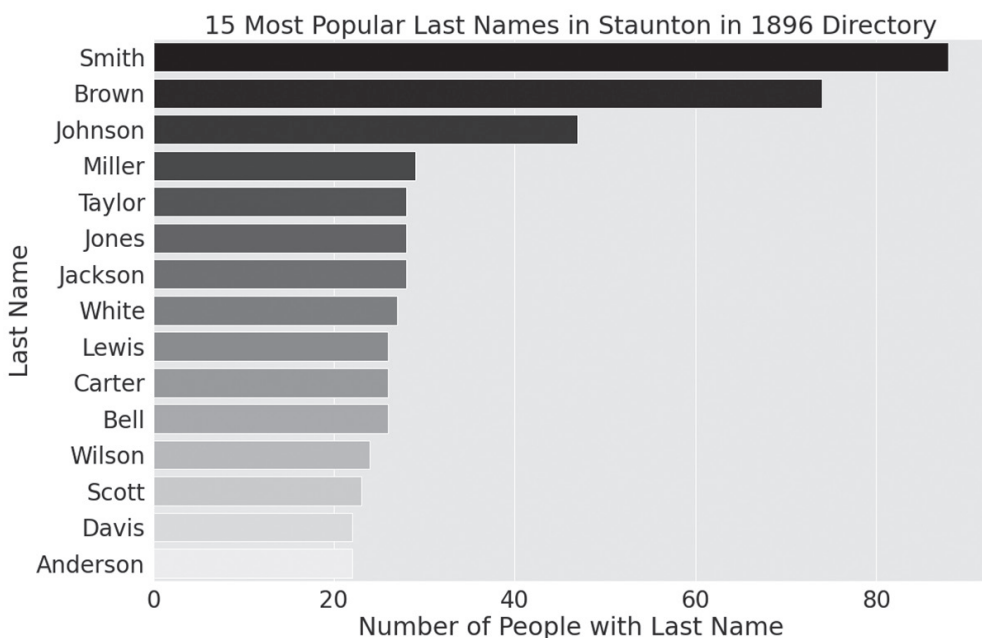
*This chart shows the numbers and types of employees at some of Staunton’s most prominent institutions.*

of Staunton in 1896. Only the most common occupations and streets are considered in the sample charts that I created in order to give an idea of the possible ways to use the data.

It is also possible to see the distribution of occupations within the prominent institutions in Staunton at the time. The number of attendants employed at each of the institutions and the race of those employees can be determined. This dataset could be useful for Staunton’s many historic institutions as they can learn more about their past and the specific people employed there through time.

By incorporating GIS, it might be possible to see the movements of people around Staunton over time. This could help researchers understand the changing demographics of neighborhoods. It might also be possible to analyze the path taken by different people and groups as they commuted to work and school.

This data could be useful to historians looking at a variety of questions, but I would hope that it might become one of the tools that groups looking at the impacts of urban renewal could use in their work.



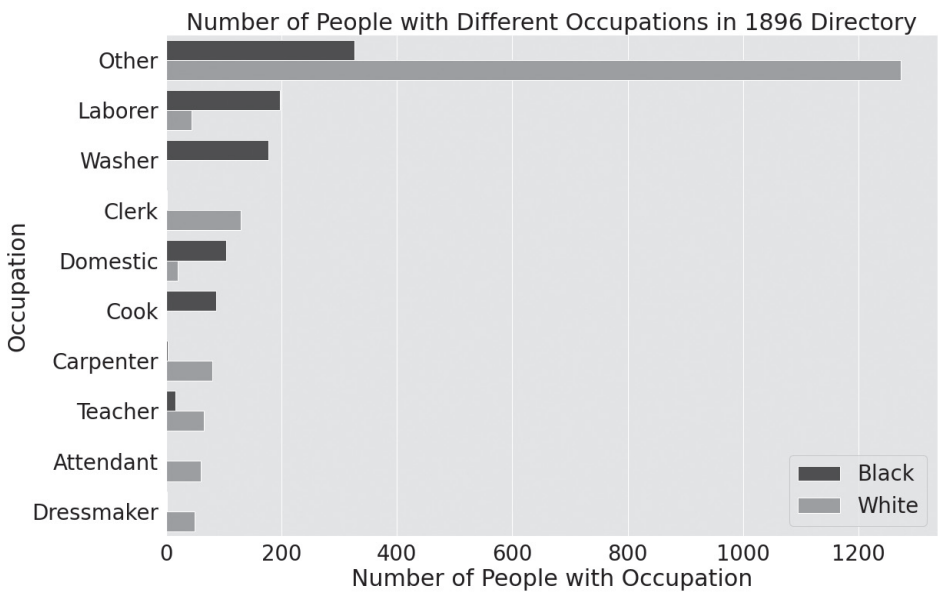
*This chart, showing the fifteen most popular surnames in the 1896 city directory, provides an example of the type of information that can be extracted from scanning the pages and creating a dataset.*

The dataset could be an important tool to help add detail to the work they have already done on documenting communities before and after urban renewal for instance.

Having a dataset with the full names and addresses of people listed in the city directories over the course of more than a century will help everyone better understand the lives of specific residents and what spaces they occupied within the city. In regard specifically to urban renewal, the data will also help put into perspective what was lost and what inequities were experienced in that section of Staunton that was destroyed. With this data, we will be able to see what residents moved in and out of certain areas of the city over time. It will also be possible to see where residents moved after the demolitions of urban renewal.

My overarching goal for the project is to provide a cost effective framework for a digitization pipeline from paper to dataset. I hope this framework will provide a method for cities to transform data that

is currently unusable and collecting dust into free and open datasets. Individuals, researchers, and institutions can then use these datasets to learn more about their local communities. We will all benefit from more stories from communities, especially those that might have been underrepresented in the historical record.



*This chart shows the number of individuals with different occupations who are listed in the 1896 directory as well as whether those people are Black or White.*

# Discovering Who was Who at the Montgomery Hall Park Pool

By Nancy Sorrells

***Editor's Note:** This short article provides a glimpse into the sort of rich stories that can now be brought to light because of the SHARP funding for digitization.*

Staunton's Montgomery Hall Park, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has a history that stretches back to the 1820s when it was the home and farm of prominent political and legal statesman John Howe Peyton. After Peyton's death, the house and farm passed through a number of owners. In 1946, the city of Staunton purchased the 148-acre farm with the purpose of converting it to a park for the local African American community. Playgrounds, tennis courts, and other recreational features were added to the grounds around Montgomery Hall, the house that remained on the site. Despite existing under the constraints of Virginia's harsh Jim Crow laws, the segregated park gained recognition as one of the finest African American facilities in Virginia from 1946-1966. The park was operated by a group of Black citizens whose minutes book and much of the associated paperwork are now contained in the Augusta County Historical Society archives.

Three years after the park opened, a pool was added to the Montgomery Hall facilities. This short research report is intended to determine those individuals who were instrumental in the operations of the pool at Montgomery Hall Park. The pool, which was a gift from the Catlett family, was opened in late summer of 1949. It was not formally dedicated, however, until the following summer (1950).

From what can be extracted from the Montgomery Hall Park (MHP) operating committee minutes in the Society archives, an essay in the *Augusta Historical Society Bulletin* (2017) and from the Staunton newspapers from the period, it appears that the committee operating the park was just trying to cover the basics for the few weeks that the pool was open in 1949 and then instituted more structure and organization from 1950 onward.<sup>1</sup>

In preparation for the pool opening, the Augusta County Chapter of the American Red Cross announced in the Staunton newspaper that it would send one African American student to each of the two schools that would accept Black students in order to complete training in water safety and lifesaving. The schools were Tennessee A&I College in Nashville, and Hampton Institute in eastern Virginia.



Life Guards to supervise pool at all times when in use. The initial fee to be \$20.00 per week with possibly a percentage of concession profits supplementing this fee. The names of prospective Life Guards include: Mr. Preston Brown, Mr. Dillard, Miss Norene Vaughn and Mr. Philly Pannell. It is desirable, however, that a Life Guard be secured who would have the interest of the Park at heart and would do other necessary jobs about the premises such as cutting grass, cleaning locker room etc.

July 13, 1949, Montgomery Hall Park minutes describing plans for hiring pool personnel.

"Since it now appears that the pool at Montgomery Hall will be open sometime during the summer, it is hoped that life saving and water safety classes can be conducted there similar to the ones that have been conducted at the Gypsy Hill Park pool for some years," said Mrs. Thomas D. Howie, secretary of the Red Cross Chapter, in the article. "Anyone who may be interested in teaching [at] the Montgomery Hall pool may qualify by attending one of the aquatic schools." (*The Staunton News-Leader*, June 13, 1949)

As construction of the pool neared completion, the MHP minutes indicate that the committee was discussing the process for hiring lifeguards:

Life Guards to supervise pool at all times when in use. The initial fee to be \$20.<sup>00</sup> per week with possibly a percentage of concession profits supplementing this fee. The names of prospective life Guards includes: Mr. Preston Brown, Mr. Dillard, Miss Norene Vaughn and Mr. Philly Pannell. It is desirable, however, that a Life Guard be secured who would have the interest of the Park At heart and would do other necessary jobs about the premises such as cutting grass, cleaning locker rooms etc. (MHP minutes, July 13, 1949)

The July 13, 1949, park committee minutes noted that everyone was busy preparing for a pool opening within the week. (The pool was not open as of July 20, which was the start of the annual Girl Scout camp, but the pool was planned to be open before the camp was complete.)

At least three persons were employed as pool personnel in 1949. The only lifeguard mentioned by name in 1949, was Preston Brown. His name is mentioned because there appeared to be a problem with the distribution of

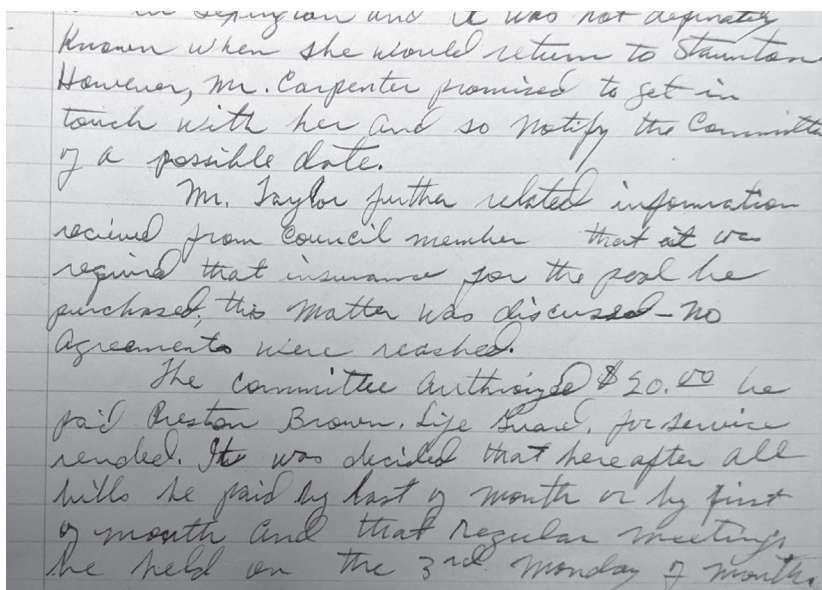
his pay. The minutes noted "The committee authorized \$20 be paid Preston Brown, Life Guard, for service rendered. It was decided that hereafter all bills be paid by last of month or by first of month and that regular meetings be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of month." (MHP minutes Aug. 24, 1949)

The first names that appear as employees associated with the pool are Norene Vaughn and Eugenia Becks. An article about the popular weeklong African American Girl Scout day camp being run at the park appeared in the July 20, 1949, issue of the Staunton newspaper.

"One planned feature, swimming, had to be omitted for the day as the swimming pool is not quite complete but it is expected that this activity will be begun later in the week. Misses Norene Vaughn and Eugenia Becks will be in charge of waterfront activities," read the article.

Vaughn took the Red Cross up on the offer and attended the African American National Aquatic School at Hampton Institute from July 6-16, 1949. The article about her heading off to the school noted that she had attended Virginia State College for two years and that upon her return from Hampton that she would teaching swimming at Montgomery Hall Park. In return for having the sponsorship of the class, Vaughn agreed to teach swimming at the park for the rest of the season in 1949. (*The Staunton News-Leader*, July 12, 1949)

Becks, who was mentioned as being in charge of the water activities along with Vaughn, for the Girl Scouts in 1949, did not get her swim

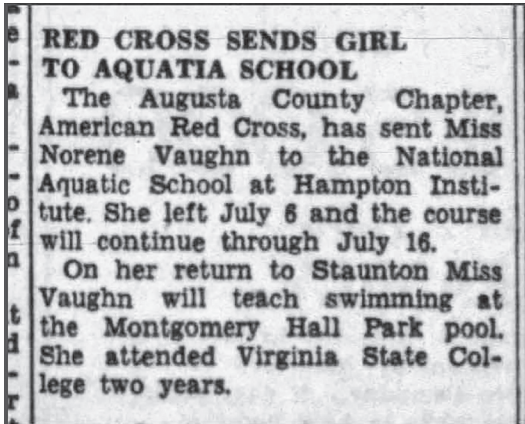


in swimming and it was not definitely known when she would return to Staunton. However, Mr. Carpenter promised to get in touch with her and so notify the Committee of a possible date.

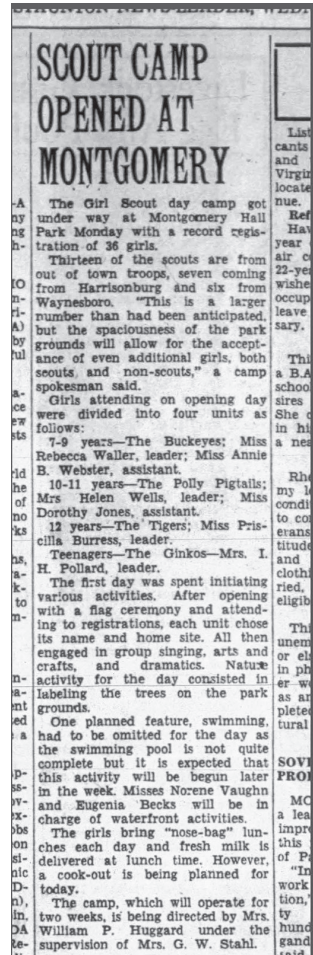
Mr. Taylor further related information received from Council member that at we require that insurance for the pool be purchased, this matter was discussed - no agreements were reached.

The committee authorized \$20.00 be paid Preston Brown, Life Guard, for service rendered. It was decided that hereafter all bills be paid by last of month or by first of month and that regular meetings be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of month.

August 24, 1949, Montgomery Hall Park minutes referencing pay to lifeguard Preston Brown.



*Staunton newspaper articles from 1949. The one on the left is about Norene Vaughn attending the National Aquatic School at Hampton Institute and returning to teach swimming at Montgomery Hall Park. The one on the right is about the 1949 Girl Scout camp at the park in which Vaughn and Eugenia Becks are the swim instructors.*

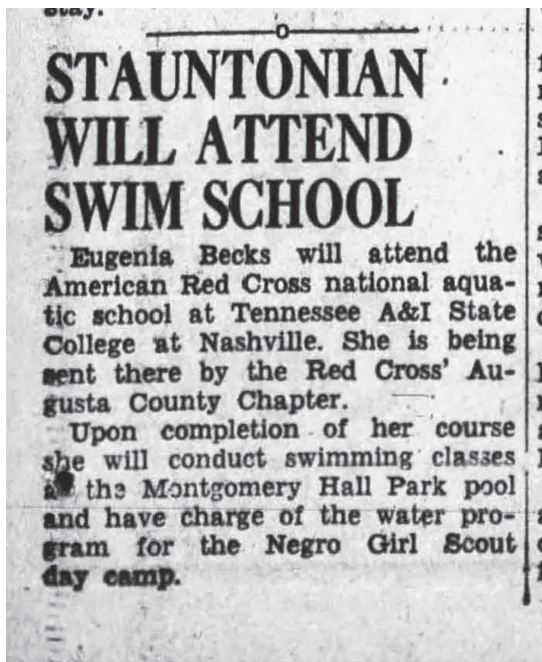


certification until the following summer after she had turned eighteen. In June of 1950, she attended the National Aquatic School in Tennessee A&I State College in Nashville. A newspaper article stated that upon her return from the training that Becks would "conduct swimming classes... and have charge of the water program for the Negro Girl Scout day camp. Another article indicated that she was teaching swim classes to the general public daily at 10 a.m. (June 16, June 28, and July 21, 1950)

Thus we know that there were at least three pool-related employees at the park in 1949: Preston Brown as a lifeguard, Norene Vaughn as a lifeguard and a waterfront activities coordinator, and Eugenia Becks who shared waterfront activities duties with Vaughn. Whether or not Becks also worked as a lifeguard and swim instructor in 1949 is uncertain.

Things became clearer in 1950. By this time, Becks had completed the two-week American Red Cross training course that included water

*Staunton newspaper article announcing that Eugenia Becks will be attending the Red Cross water safety class in Nashville.*



safety and lifesaving at the National Aquatic School at A&I State College in Nashville. Her certificate is dated June 30, 1950. She was hired to teach daily swimming classes, provide lifeguard services as needed, and be in charge of the water program for the Girl Scout camp that ran July 10-21 in 1950. Vaughn and Brown do not appear again in the minutes or in any newspaper articles although they still may have had some duties at the pool. It is clear that there were always lifeguards at the pool in addition to Becks.

The minutes of the park committee reflect her hiring:

Second business was the employing of Miss Eugenia Becks as life guard, her salary was placed at \$15.<sup>00</sup>-per week. She would teach swimming classes in mornings and suppliment [sic] at the pool daily and on week-ends – the definite arrangements to be worked out between present personnel & Miss Becks.

Mr. Kincaid motioned that Miss Becks teach a class in swimming [Sponsored by the Local Chapter of Red Cross]; Second by Mr. Harden. The president, Mr. Miller suggested the rate of pay for Miss Becks; seconded by Mr. Murray." (MHP minutes, The date on this page of the minutes book is torn off, but the committee is still planning the dedication of the pool, which has not yet happened.)



The pool was finally dedicated on Thursday, August 17, 1950. Staunton's Mayor Grubert made a formal address at the dedication, as did two prominent African American leaders who were involved in the park operations, Dr. C.J. Waller and Kenneth L. Jones. (August 11, Aug. 18, 1950)

For the next decade Eugenia Becks, who eventually married and became Eugenia Becks Taylor, was the face of the Montgomery Hall Park pool. She graduated from college with a teaching degree in health and physical education and moved out of state, but she returned every summer to work at the park. Throughout the decade, she apparently periodically informed the park committee that she would be unable to continue and attempts were made to hire other people, but she always returned to head up the program.

Montgomery Hall  
Park minutes from  
early 1950 discussing  
the hiring of Eugenia  
Becks as the swimming  
instructor.

previous National as participants and National guests  
be satisfied, and that their presence be requested.  
There will be a short program by Minister to follow  
dedication services.  
Second business was the employ of Miss Eugenia Becks  
as life guard, her salary was placed at \$15.00 per  
week. She would teach swimming classes in morning and  
supplement at the pool daily and on week ends -  
for definite arrangements to be worked out between  
present personnel & Miss Becks.  
Mr. Hincible Motioned that Miss Becks teach a class in  
swimming [Sponsored by the Social Chapter of Red Cross], Second  
by Mr. Hincible. He presented, Mr. Hincible suggested the  
rate of pay for Miss Becks, seconded by Mr. Murray.  
Next was a request from the Citizens Bank  
for some committee or committees to file  
financial statement, in that Mr. Langston was  
not endorsing the rate of the Park.

The July 10, 1951, Staunton  
newspaper article, right,  
announced how many cer-  
tificates Becks had issued to  
beginning swimmers in the  
year from July 1, 1950 to  
June 30, 1951.

small monthly payments.

### Water Safety

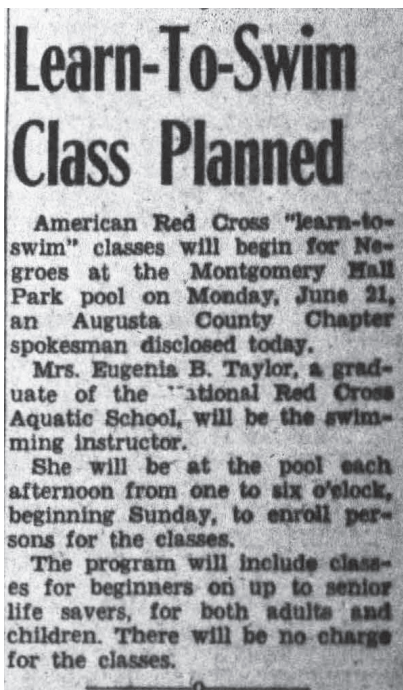
July 1, 1950 to June 30, 1951:

Thirty-eight beginner certificates  
were issued at Montgomery Hall  
pool by Eugenia Becks.

Eleven beginner, three intermedi-  
ate, one swimmer, and one junior  
life saving certificates were issued  
at Gypsy Hill Park pool by Polly  
Jean Silling.

Twenty-eight beginner, 25 inter-  
mediate, thirteen swimmer, five ad-  
vanced swimmer, and 23 senior life  
saving certificates were issued at  
Mary Baldwin and Stuart Hall.

*The article on the right ran in the June 12, 1954, issue of the newspaper and announced upcoming swim classes being taught by Eugenia Becks Taylor at Montgomery Hall Park that summer.*



I had the privilege to sit down and interview her in 2017. She spoke of the popularity of the pool and of her duties as head of the swim program.

"Sometimes we were like sardines," she said of how many members from the community used the pool. Although she only ever had to rescue one man who tired in the deep end of the pool, she admitted to having to rescue "a lot of swimming trunks" that were made of a slippery material that sometimes came right off when a boy dove from the diving board.

In addition to lifeguard duties, Mrs. Taylor taught swimming classes every morning Monday through Friday. "We had beginners class in the morning followed by intermediate. Classes were over by twelve o'clock." On her own in the evenings, she taught several elderly women who had expressed a desire to learn how to swim. She also had to test the pH of the water every day and teach the Girl Scouts who had summer camp at Montgomery Hall Park. On some days, she helped with the other activities such as horseshoes and croquet. (Interview with Eugenia Becks Taylor, March 4, 2017)

The newspapers corroborate her memories, noting her as the head of water instruction for the Girl Scouts every year and as being in charge of swimming classes. In 1952, swim classes, under the direction of "Miss Eugenia Becks, an accredited Red Cross swimming instructor," were offered from June 18-August 18. (*The Staunton News-Leader*, June 12, 1952) Another article noted that from July 1, 1950, until June 30, 1951, Eugenia Becks had



*Eugenia Becks Taylor in 2017 holding the American Red Cross National Aquatic School certificate that was issued to her on June 30, 1950, upon her completion of a two-week class in Nashville.*

issued thirty-eight beginning swimming certificates at Montgomery Hall. (*The Staunton News-Leader*, July 10, 1951)

The 1954 swim season at Montgomery Hall Park was announced in the newspaper in June, noting that Mrs. Eugenia B. Taylor would be in charge. Her classes for the summer were to include everything from beginners up to senior lifesaving for adults and children. There was no charge for the classes. (*The Staunton News-Leader*, June 12, 1954)

From the opening of the pool in 1949 until about 1960, Eugenia Becks Taylor was the person most associated with the Montgomery Hall Park pool. She was one of the original employees in 1949, and from 1950 until about 1960, she was the person in charge of all pool programs.

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<sup>1</sup>Note that the 2017 *Bulletin* article states on page 116 that the pool dedication was held late in the summer of 1949. This is incorrect. It was held early in the summer of 1950.

# Book Reviews

by Daniel A. Métraux

**Editor's Note:** The following section consists of reviews of recent books on national, Virginia, and regional history. Unless otherwise noted, these reviews are by AHB Book Review Editor and Associate Editor Daniel A. Métraux, retired Professor of Asian Studies at Mary Baldwin University. Please send any reviews or questions about reviews to the AHB's Book Review Editor Daniel Métraux at [dmetraux@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:dmetraux@marybaldwin.edu). The deadline for all reviews is November 1, 2022

**Jonathan A. Noyalas, *Slavery and Freedom in the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War Era*. Gainesville Florida: University Press of Florida, 2021. ISBN: 978-0-8130-6686-8. 227 pp.**

Historians in recent years have written many books and articles about the Shenandoah Valley at the time of the Civil War. We find many discussions of vital battles, the importance of the Valley as the grain producer for Confederate forces and so forth, but there is a dearth of credible research on slavery in this region. Fortunately, Professor Jonathan A. Noyalas, director of the McCormick Civil War Institute at Shenandoah University, has provided a very comprehensive and lucid account of this infamous institution in his most recent book, *Slavery and Freedom in the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War Era*.

The focus of this work is on the chaotic situation enslaved people faced, especially in the northern part of the Valley, both during and immediately after the Civil War. Noyalas begins his study by discounting the writing of early Valley historians such as Joseph Waddell who informed his readers over a century ago that the "institution of slavery never had a strong hold in Augusta" County because the Valley had largely been settled by Scots Irish and German ancestry. "The Scotch-Irish had no love for it [slavery] and German people were generally averse to it... (4)."

Noyalas goes to great lengths in recounting the history of slavery in this region and points out that it was practiced far and wide here. Slavery was a critically important component of farming and industry in the Valley. By 1850, the enslaved population had risen to 27,402 persons, close to twenty-five percent of the total population (the enslaved population in eastern Virginia was about fifty percent of the total population). Enslaved persons did much of the farm work that brought prosperity to the region.



Slaves were an important investment and the practice of renting out the labor of enslaved persons enhanced the wealth of many enslavers.

Noyalas also details the vile and cruel treatment accorded enslaved people. There were endless work hours, frequent beatings, and harsh practices meant to demean the slaves. Abuse of enslaved people was enhanced each autumn as slave traders moved chained groups of slaves through the Valley to be sold outside of Virginia. But there was plenty of barbarity even in places such as Staunton where in 1780 Violet, a young slave woman set fire to her enslaver's house. An Augusta County court sentenced her to death by hanging, but after the execution her head was severed from her body and placed upon a pole in a public place near Staunton as a reminder to the other slaves who considered stepping out of line.

The core of Noyalas's book is about the chaos surrounding the city of Winchester throughout the Civil War. The presence of Union troops in or near the city during much of the war provided the opportunity for thousands of enslaved people to gain freedom once they reached Union lines and many enslaved persons took this opportunity to escape bondage. At first federal forces obeyed orders to return escapees to their masters. The Lincoln administration was afraid that border states like Maryland and Kentucky might secede if slaves could be freed by Union troops, but when a Union general at Fort Monroe decided to welcome enslaved escapees as "contrabands of war," federal troops in Winchester began to take in slaves. This practice grew in intensity in January 1863 with the promulgation of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

The end of the Civil War in April 1865 brought an end to the confusion caused by large streams of enslaved people running away from their old masters hoping to make it to Union lines:

The uneasiness in the Shenandoah Valley's African Americans felt throughout the conflict's four years subsided with news of Lee's surrender at Appomattox. They no longer had to navigate a complex world of being in Union territory one day, Confederate the next, and in no-man's land another. Confederate surrender also marked the end of enslaved people determining the best time to flee and weighing the consequences of escape not only for themselves, but family and friends who might have been left behind (138).

Conditions for the Valley's African Americans remained difficult in the decades following the end of the war. They had no property, no jobs, little food, and few prospects. The White population treated the former slaves with utter contempt. "The anger former enslavers in the Valley in the wake of Union victory prompted some to brutalize individuals once enslaved in unprecedented ways (140)." A few former slaves moved north, but most stayed in the Valley. The Freedmen's Bureau helped some Blacks get jobs, opened schools to promote some degree of literacy, and provided a refuge for many of the dispossessed. In time many of the former slaves found some solace in forming their own small communities that included a church, stores, and other important centers of life.

Noyalas has written a masterpiece that will stand as the key study of Valley slavery for years to come. The writing is well organized, clear, and easy to follow. The depth of research is evident in the many examples that Noyalas uses to support his major conclusions. Although most of the author's attention is focused on the northern sections of the Valley, there is plenty of information about Staunton and Augusta County to satisfy local readers. The book contains many helpful illustrations that enhance its value.

**C. Matthew West, *A Time for Moderation: J. Sargeant Reynolds and Virginia's New Democrats, 1960-1971*. Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-945015-35-2. 226 pp.**

A lengthy feature article appearing in the British newspaper the *Guardian* in March 2021 proclaimed that Virginia had become the most progressive Southern state. The abolition of the death penalty, the legalization of marijuana, the highest minimum wage in the South, stricter gun control laws highlighted a political and social revolution that has transformed political and social life in the Old Dominion. These changes are an about face from the political dynasty of Senator Harry Byrd, Sr. and the Byrd machine that ruled Virginia through the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s. But it took another major revolution in the 1960s that moved Virginia and the Democratic Party away from the ultra-conservative Byrd machine to create a platform for the progressive successes of recent years,

C. Matthew West, an exceptionally talented young historian who graduated from the University of Virginia School of Law in 2021, has written a brilliant book, *A Time for Moderation: J. Sargeant Reynolds and Virginia's New Democrats, 1960-1971*, that details the tremendous changes that took place in the 1960s in Virginia. Few decades have brought so

much transformational change to Virginia's political landscape as the 1960s. West argues that "Unprecedented legal and demographic developments disrupted conservative's long entrenched control of both the Democratic Party and of state government, ushering in a new, dynamic, and competitive era in the Old Dominion."

West focuses his attention on J. Sargeant Reynolds (1936-1971), a talented and charismatic businessman and politician who led the fight for a more progressive and modern Virginia and who became the youngest Virginian to win election as lieutenant governor. Reynolds during his lifetime was often compared to John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert Kennedy. West sums up his strong affirmation of Reynolds's place in Virginia history:

Reynolds was a dynamic figure who occupied a place in Virginia political life during a historically dynamic era. As a candidate and an elected official, he was a bellwether of the changes that were ripping through the halls of state government during the mid-to-late 1960s. First elected to office at the age of twenty-nine, the youthful lawmaker was in the vanguard of a new generation of Democrats who infused the Old Dominion with energy and forward-looking policymaking. As a representative from Richmond [in the House of Delegates and later as a State Senator], he forcefully advocated for urban interests in debates over sales tax distribution, city-county consolidation, and state aid for welfare and housing improvements. Influenced by his experience as an educator and civic leader, Reynolds was a champion of public education during his time in office, viewing schooling as the principal means by which the state could advance equality of opportunity for young people (155).

Sadly, Reynolds died from a lethal brain tumor in June 1971 at the age of thirty-four. It was said that he would have been a shoo-in for governor in 1973, but that was not to be.

This book, however, is in fact much more than a biography of Reynolds. Indeed, it is a considered study of the dynamic period when Virginia discarded the tentacles of the Byrd machine and became a dynamic and modern state. West writes in a truly clear and easy manner and his depth of research is most impressive. This work is one of the best studies of postwar Virginia political history and deserves wide distribution and readership.

Unfortunately, at present only a few copies of this book have been published. The book is not listed in any commercial site like Amazon or bn.com, is not for sale in any bookstore except the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, and is found in only three libraries in Virginia. Certainly, this brilliant history of modern Virginia deserves wide distribution.

**Ty Seidule, *Robert E. Lee and Me: A Southerner's Reckoning with the Myth of the Lost Cause*. New York: St. Martin's, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-250-23925-6. 304 pp.**

Ty Seidule is a career military officer who later became a West Point history professor. His most recent book, *Robert E. Lee and Me: A Southerner's Reckoning with the Myth of the Lost Cause* is a concerted effort to confront the ugly problem of racism in the United States. He writes:

More and more people, especially white Americans, seemed to accept the reality of systemic racism in the United States, epitomized by the Confederacy and the Lost Cause myth. Was this the clarion call that would result in change? Would the country recognize its foundational problem and act?

Racism is the virus in the American dirt, infecting everything and everyone. To combat racism, we must do more than acknowledge the long period of white supremacy policies must change. Yet, an understanding of history remains the foundation. The only way to prevent a racist future is first to understand our racist past....

Today we are finally, finally, having a national dialogue on what the Confederacy and Lost Cause myth meant. It is gut-wrenching. The truth is ruthless. We are finding out that many of the stories and myths that white America grew up with were untrue and racist. We are finally taking into account the millions of African Americans who lived enslaved, realizing that their lives were every bit as important as the white planter class. Cities and schools across the country are now confronting the past.

This whole book is a detailed foundation for the further discovery and understanding of racism in the United States. Seidule claims that he as a youngster growing up in Alexandria was spoon fed the same white



lies about slavery, the Civil War, the adulated sainthood of Robert E. Lee, and other falsehoods perpetuated by the Lost Cause movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s. He was stunned to finally realize late in his military and teaching career that white Americans from all over the country have “grown up with the same myths, really lies, about the Civil War “that he learned as a child in Virginia.

Seidule goes to great lengths to dissect the foundation of “Lost Cause” mythology, starting with a strong argument that the cause of the Civil War was over the question of slavery, not states’ rights, and that the goal of the South was to build a white supremacist nation built on the bedrock of slavery. The idea of “plantations” needs to be recognized for what they were—forced labor slave exploitation camps. Slavery was both ugly and cruel, but it was the foundation of the South’s economy. Sadly, the Lost Cause movement has romanticized slavery through such things as the story and movie of *Gone with the Wind*.”

Seidule notes that while Robert E. Lee had many noteworthy achievements including his time as president of Washington College (now Washington and Lee University), his high moral character has been grossly exaggerated. He states repeatedly that Lee was a traitor. He had been a lifelong leader in the U.S. Army and was one of eight Virginia colonels who held that rank in 1860. Seven of these Virginians stayed loyal to the Union; only Lee went over to the Confederacy and led a campaign that killed several hundred thousand American soldiers in the U.S. Army. Seidule argues convincingly that Lee had violated Article III, Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution: “Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them.” Lee, Seidule notes, “believed in racial control through slavery, He fought to create a slave republic because he believed in slavery.”

Seidule criticizes his own alma mater, W&L, for its maintenance of the Lee Chapel that elevates Lee as a saint as holy as any Christian saint—even though the chapel fails to make any reference to Christianity.

Seidule also delves into the history of whites attacking former slaves after the end of Reconstruction including the history of lynching in Walton County where he attended high school. He also examines the ways in which the U.S. military in the past has virtually worshiped the Confederacy and its leaders like JEB Stuart and Lee. This practice includes the military naming many of its large bases after Confederate leaders.

*Robert E. Lee and Me* is a fascinating discussion of the lasting influence

of the Lost Cause movement in our history. Seidule has put a great deal of research into this book, which is both persuasive and compelling. The writing is clear, and the message is powerful. It should be used as a text in any college or graduate course on the history of the Civil War.

**Rick Lambert, *Treasures in Stone: A History of the Natural Chimneys, Mount Solon, Virginia*. Lot's Wife Publishing: Staunton, Virginia, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-934368-59-6. 209 pp.**

The Natural Chimneys, located near Mount Solon, Virginia, have been a major tourist attraction for two centuries. Widely known as the Cyclopean Towers in the 1800s, they are a natural rock structure known as karst, a term that includes such features as caves, pinnacled bedrock, sinkholes, springs, and sinking streams. The towering formation includes seven rock "chimneys" that range in height from 65 to 120 feet and are formed from dead sea creatures at the bottom of an inland sea that began to accumulate and harden into limestone some 500 million years ago when the region was deep underwater. The formation today is the main attraction in a regional park that is owned and operated by Augusta County.

Rick Lambert, a veteran caver, a director at large of the Virginia Speleological Survey, a member of the Virginia Cave board, and a recognized regional historian, has written a lovely book, *Treasures in Stone: A History of the Natural Chimneys, Mount Solon, Virginia*. This beautifully illustrated work offers a detailed history of the Chimneys since early in the nineteenth century as well as an overview of the various activities that take place in the park on a regular basis even today.

The Chimneys has been a major tourist attraction since the early 1800s. Visiting writers noted that the towers were "among the greatest curiosities of nature in the Union." A writer in an 1898 issue of the *Staunton Spectator and Vindicator* commented on the beauty of the Chimneys (28):

Near Staunton is one of Nature's curiosities, the Cyclopean Towers, immense limestone towers, seventy feet in height. They have the appearance of a ruined castle, resembling those which were raised in feudal times to guard the passes of the Rhine, or like such are still seen in mouldering majesty on many an alpine peak. These towers, of which there are seven, lift their heads above the lofty elms like so many antique chimneys in the midst of a grove. Around the base of these runs the bed of a stream which, winding around them, forms a natural moat.

Lambert includes perhaps a hundred or more illustrations, many of them from post cards, dating back to the 1800s. Accompanying these pictures are excerpts from a variety of publications about the Chimneys. Lambert has done an outstanding job locating and including these pictures and texts in this beautifully created book that can best be described as a magnificent photo album.

The park, which surrounds the towers, is today a very popular camping ground that runs along the river that flows through the property. It is also the site of a jousting tournament that has purportedly been held on a regular basis since the 1830s –“The Oldest Continuously Held Sporting Event in America.” The annual Red Wing Roots Music Festival brings large crowds and many talented musicians to the park.

Other rich chapters explore “The Karst Features of Natural Chimneys Park” and the “Geologic Setting and Origin of Natural Chimneys.” Here we learn about the scientific origin of the limestone towers.

Rick Lambert has produced a notable masterpiece that will long stand as the “go to” book about the Chimneys. The amount and quality of the research that went into this project is most impressive. One must also commend the publisher for its high quality presentation of this work.

**Dennis B. Blanton, *Conquistador's Wake: Tracking the Legacy of Hernando De Soto in the Indigenous Southeast*. Athens Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-0820356371. 237 pp.**

A full century before the British settled at Jamestown and Plymouth, Spanish explorers and military forces were conquering native empires in what are today Mexico and Peru. Spaniards had also advanced through wide swaths of the American Southwest. One bold Spanish conquistador, Hernando de Soto, led an expeditionary force through parts of the Southeast. Landing at what is now Tampa in 1539, Soto charged through what is now Georgia, eventually ending his foray on the Mississippi River that carried his demoralized and desperate soldiers into the Gulf of Mexico and eventual haven at Vera Cruz.

Soto's excursion in search of gold and other riches brought few if any riches, but there were contacts with many Indian tribes with whom the Spanish traded goods and exchanged gifts. Nobody is exactly sure of Soto's route although a number of historians and archeologists have entertained a supposed route despite the fact that there is little evidence to back their claims.

Veteran archaeologist Dennis B. Blanton, Associate Professor of Anthropology at James Madison University and a member of the Board of the Augusta Historical Society, worked with several other archaeologists and young volunteers on a nearly decade-long archaeological project at a place known as the Glass Site, located in Telfair County, Georgia. This spot, near the town of McRae, Georgia, attracted growing interest for Blanton's crew as they continued to unearth enough European items that indicated that Soto had traversed through the area rather than taking a route proposed by other historians.

Native Americans treasured glass beads provided by the Spanish. Rare glass beads, more often found only in Florida, showed up at the Glass site. There were other interesting discoveries as well including a variety of metal and glass artifacts. Their distinct patterns and date of production correspond very well with the time of Soto's venture across Georgia. The inevitable conclusion is that Soto and his soldiers traversed through an Indian settlement located at the Glass site and traded with residents of the Indian encampment.

Although the history of Soto's blundering march through Georgia is interesting, the true value of Blanton's book is his focus on the exploration and methodology of archaeology as a science. Most of the earlier chapters focus on the step-by-step, year after year, process of discovering the buried treasures of the Glass site. Blanton explains his purpose in writing this book:

I believe the archaeological endeavor I've shared with you can make a useful difference in the way we understand a slice of history. To that end, I have given honest commentary, most for the benefit of the less initiated, on the day-to-day practice of archaeology and history. I have sought to demystify the process, to explain how it works – and sometimes doesn't – and how it can be steered by quirks of luck and happenstance. Along the way, I have also tried to explain the good, the bad, and the ugly of archaeological evidence itself. We pity the modern-day detective assigned to a cold case, but that's the only kind an archaeologist knows, and in the extreme (174).

Blanton's superb work serves as an ideal primer for any introductory student of archaeology. It is best suited for an introductory course in



this field where the instructor wishes to provide a clear case study of what archaeologists do and the many challenges they face in working in the field. The writing here is clear and the style is refreshing and very personal. It's almost as if Blanton is talking to the reader in giving him a front row seat to the excavation of the Glass site.

**H. W. Brands, *The Zealot and the Emancipator: John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, and the Struggle for American Freedom*. New York: Doubleday, 2020. ISBN-13 : 978-0-38554400. 464 pp.**

Celebrated historian H. W. Brands, History Chair at the University of Texas, details the various, often conflicting, roads that led to the tragedy of the Civil War. We have the abolitionist side led by the likes of John Brown (1800-1859) and William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879) who denounced slavery and adopted the then extreme position that Blacks were the equals of Whites. There was also the more gradualist side supported by many Republicans like Abraham Lincoln who strongly hated slavery and strongly opposed its expansion into newly-won territories controlled by the federal government. These comparative moderates promised not to interfere with slavery in existing states because the Constitution protected the institution there. Lincoln's goal for the prosecution of the Civil War was the salvation of the Union and not the emancipation of slaves, but by late 1862 he had reversed himself with the Emancipation Proclamation.

The Civil War was largely brought about because of the irreconcilable positions of zealots on both sides of the equation. Southern extremists championed the institution of slavery. Not only was slavery a vital component of the South's growing economy, but it was also supposedly supported and ordained by the Bible and the commonly accepted notion of White superiority. Zealots in the North called for the immediate abolition of slavery while moderates like Lincoln and even Stephen Douglas advocated patience and compromise. Eventually the tactics and pressures exerted by the zealots led to the collapse of the moderate positions and the secession of the South.

Events such as the Dred Scott decision, the Fugitive Slave Law, and Stephen Douglas's activities on behalf of Popular Sovereignty inflamed the politics of the 1850s and created a clear divide between North and South. But it was the fierce determination of zealots like Brown in the North and extremists in the South that dragged a reluctant nation into its most bloody conflict. Brands devotes nearly the first half of his book to the

evolution of Brown's thinking. We see a man who was deeply religious, obsessed with freeing the slaves even by violence – and possessing enough charisma to convince a few wealthy northern abolitionists to finance his campaigns. He moved to Kansas with several of his sons in the mid-1850s to participate in the bloody conflict between free-state and pro-slavery settlers. We get a detailed look at the Pottawatomie massacre of 1856 when Brown and his band dragged five allegedly pro-slavery men from their beds and murdered them. Despite his status as a wanted man, Brown continued his abolitionist activities up through the failed raid at Harpers Ferry in 1859 and his execution by hanging later that year. Brands is sure that the Harpers Ferry fiasco galvanized the South into action, which led to the creation of the Confederacy a year later.

Brands devotes the second half of his book to the evolution of Lincoln's thinking from accepting slavery where it existed to his decision to make the war a crusade to end slavery. We see Lincoln as a fiercely ambitious politician who had a keen sense of popular opinion. He realized at the start of the war that many people in the North had not adopted the abolitionist stance against slavery – that saving the Union was of paramount importance. It was only well into the conflict when tens of thousands of former slaves joined the Union army that Lincoln sensed that the crusade against slavery was possible.

We can see some eerie parallels between events described by Brands in the 1850s and 1860s and events in 2020, which include widespread racial tensions, the notion of white supremacy, and a major lethal virus. The result is a vigorous debate about whether federal or state government should handle these crises. Today we are a nation bitterly divided over these and other issues. Another civil war is highly unlikely, but the parallels between 1860 and 2020 as presented in this book are clear.

Brands's book is a beautifully written analysis as to the forces that led to the Civil War. He convinces the reader that war itself was not inevitable, but that forces such as Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry made armed conflict a distinct possibility due to the pressure exerted by zealots on both sides. This book is professionally researched using valuable prime sources and is very clearly presented to the reader.

**Gordon Chang, *Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019. ISBN: 978-0358331810. 304 pp.**

The meeting of two huge locomotives, one associated with the Central Pacific and the other from the Union Pacific Railways, at Promontory Point in Utah on May 10, 1869, is one of the most notable events in American history. Now, for the first time, the United States was connected by rail from coast to coast and the journey from New York to San Francisco, which before would have taken many grueling months, could now be comfortably completed in less than a week. Fortunately, for all those involved in the building of the transcontinental railway, virtually all the construction was completed by an “army” of over twenty thousand Chinese workers. Their hard work, reliable service, and great ingenuity allowed them to complete the building of the railway from Sacramento to Promontory Point in slightly less than four years. They had to traverse over and through the High Sierra Mountains and through the harsh hot deserts of Nevada and Utah to reach their destination over a course of nearly 900 miles. Their story has almost totally disappeared from history, but author Gordon Chang, a professor of History and Asian Studies at Stanford University, has pieced together a copious history of the work of these Chinese in his recent book, *The Ghosts of Gold Mountain*.

For five years from 1864 to May 1869, Chinese constituted by far the largest single workforce in American industry to that date, a figure not surpassed in numbers until the Industrial Revolution in the late nineteenth century. The Chinese army of workers represented about ninety percent of the laborers hired by the Central Pacific. They held nearly every position available. They were engineers, laborers, foremen, contractors, masons, cooks, medical practitioners, carpenters, and teamsters. “Thousands more Chinese associated with them as friends and relatives, as part of the immense supply chain that provisioned them for years, and, away from the track in their off-time, as gamblers, opium smokers, prostitutes, and devout worshippers of the gods and spirits who watched over them in their perilous work (7).”

Chang traces the origins of these Chinese to their distant rural villages located in the Pearl River delta near Guangzhou (Canton) in Guangdong Province in southeastern China. They lived in small villages in four counties (Taishan, Kaiping, Enping, and Xinhui) known collectively as the Siyi counties. Their ancestors had lived there peacefully in small farming

communities for centuries, but their tranquil way of life was suddenly devastated by intense conflicts including the Opium War of 1839-1842 and the Taiping Rebellion of the 1850s that killed perhaps as many as twenty-five million Chinese. The destruction of their land and way of life forced a large diaspora of several million Chinese, many of them male and from the Siyi region. Most of them migrated to Southeast Asia (their descendants today live in such places as Singapore and Malaysia), but a growing number also moved to North America. From the early 1850s, when they began to arrive in California in significant numbers in search of gold, to 1868, when many Chinese came to the West Coast to work for the Central Pacific, an estimated 107,000 Chinese came to the United States.

Beyond the fact that there were as many as twenty thousand Chinese railway workers employed at various times in the late 1860s, we know little about them as individuals. The workers sent tens of thousands of letters back home to their families in China, but very few of these letters have survived. Chang fortunately found an advertisement written in Chinese in China urging young men to go to California to work on the railway. Apparently, many Chinese accepted the offer and made the journey to the United States.

The owners of the Pacific Central Railroad began searching for reliable workers in 1864 and 1865. At first, they were reluctant to hire Chinese, but when they had a hard time finding other reliable persons and saw how hard and diligently the first few Chinese worked, increasing numbers of Chinese were soon employed. The white owners and managers would hire a Chinese foreman who spoke some English and would leave it up to him to hire the laborers. The owners rarely if ever kept records of their many employees. They simply gave the foremen enough money to pay a set number of workers. The amount of pay was sufficient to attract a large pool of laborers, though at one point the Chinese did go on strike to demand higher pay and shorter hours. Their strike was successful. Chang estimates that about a thousand workers died before the work was completed, but we will never know the exact number of deaths.

It takes several trips deep into the High Sierras to fully appreciate the difficult task facing railway engineers and Chinese laborers as they worked to create a usable route through the Sierras. The mountains rise sharply and suddenly from the floor of the Central Valley and building any mode of transportation over the Sierras is a monumental challenge. The high altitudes of the Sierras—at times over nine thousand feet—



make for a barren terrain and a vastly different climate than in nearby Sacramento and there are very few mountain passes to ease travel. The Chinese had to figure out how to bore many tunnels through hard rock and on the sides of the mountains. They also devised a system of sheds covering the tracks to keep them free of snow in the colder months. The engineering genius of the railway's architects and the hard demanding work performed mainly by Chinese workers brought about this miraculous transportation system.

Chang's book will benefit all instructors who teach about the history of immigration in the United States. We have here the classic story of a major immigrant group, the Chinese, who came to the United States in great numbers to enhance their fortunes and find a better way of life. Chang carefully examines the difficult lives of Chinese in the middle of the nineteenth century and the factors that led them to move to a totally alien culture. We see how hard they had to work to gain a niche in the American economy first through gold mining and later as railway workers. To succeed, they had to take on difficult tasks while working longer hours at lower pay than their white counterparts. As is the case with any new immigrant group in the United States, the Chinese faced violent opposition and oppression from nativist groups who feared that the Chinese would deprive them of their livelihoods.

Chang also presents us with a case study of the history of racism in the United States. The Chinese had a different skin color, their facial features were different, they wore different kinds of clothes, ate different food, spoke an alien language, and practiced a different religion. Wherever they went, the Chinese experienced extreme cases of racism directed against them. They could not marry whites. They could not become citizens. Their job opportunities were greatly restricted and, worst of all, they often experienced violent attacks by white mobs that expelled them from many towns and inflicted harsh bodily harm.

Bad weather frequently slowed progress in the railroad construction. Vast amounts of snowfall from October to April further compounded the difficulties facing the intrepid builders of the railway through the Sierras. Dangerous snowstorms could arrive at any time without warning. I can sympathize with their situation. Once in June 2010 my daughter and I left a sweltering Sacramento for a day of fishing at Silver Lake high in the Sierras near Lake Tahoe. When we reached an elevation of eight thousand feet, we found ourselves facing a blinding snowstorm that took us several

grueling hours to escape. When the Chinese worked in winter, they had to clear snowbanks as high as thirty feet. Many Chinese became victims of sudden unexpected avalanches.

Chang has written a brilliant study of the Chinese railway workers of the late 1860s. Drawing on fading family memories, government records, archaeological reports, and contemporary newspaper accounts, Chang is able to reconstruct their difficult work and social organization that underlay it, with younger workers being led and organized by older mainly Chinese foremen and labor brokers. We learn about the complex camp life of the workers, the horrific conditions Chinese women experienced when they had to work as tireless sex slaves for the young male laborers, and the loneliness of the workers living in an alien culture far away from home. Chang also presents a sad picture of the racism the Chinese faced from many whites in California although a surprising number of influential whites showed deep appreciation and respect for the work of the railway workers.

Chang writes in a clear and easy to understand manner. His depth of research is impressive and his passion for his subject matter is obvious. *Ghosts of Gold Mountain* is a landmark book suitable to any interested student of history.

**David S. Brown, *The Last American Aristocrat: The Brilliant Life and Improbable Education of Henry Adams*. New York: Scribner, 2020. ISBN: 978-1982128234. 464 pp.**

The Adams family presented the United States with one of its notable early family dynasties. John Adams and his son John Quincy Adams both served as early presidents of the new republic while Charles Francis Adams (1807-1886), son of John Quincy Adams, was a noted historian as well as a governor of Massachusetts and the American ambassador to Great Britain during the Civil War. The last nationally prominent dynasty member was Henry Adams (1838-1918), who became a celebrated writer, essayist, novelist, and historian. His principal historical works—those about the Jefferson and Madison administrations and Gothic architecture—are unrivaled masterpieces. His autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams*, published shortly after his death, is widely regarded as one of the great literary masterpieces of the twentieth century.

Noted historian David Brown has written a deep probing intellectual treatment of Henry Adams's life. He was without doubt the most eclectic, accomplished, and critically important writer of his time. He had

enormous access to the leading political and cultural figures of his time. From his home on Lafayette Square in Washington and his many travels in Europe and later to the Middle East and Asia, he met regularly with presidents, European leaders, and the leading writers and other major figures of his time. He traveled to London at the outset of the Civil War in 1861 where he worked as the private secretary to his ambassador father Charles F. Adams. He later accepted a post as an assistant professor of History at Harvard University and for several years was the editor of the *North American Review*, the leading journal of political and cultural affairs in the United States in the latter years of the nineteenth century. Adams's closest friends and associates included Secretary of State John Hay, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, and President Theodore Roosevelt.

Brown correctly states that Adams was the leading "talking head" of his era, an intellectual star whose writing and ideas were widely circulated among the Washington and Boston elite. His essays and commentaries on the degrading nature of American politics during the clearly corrupt Grant administration and America's obsession with money and corruption during the "Gilded Age" won Adams a wide audience. His work as an historian and as president of the American Historical Association served as a model for and established the criteria and methods that other later historians adapted for their work. Through this book, we get to know Adams as a major American commentator and thinker of his age.

Brown offers a critical view of Adams's prejudices and world view. Adams was at times an elitist who believed that the country would be best run if directed by a small group of talented and highly educated men such as himself and his companions like Lodge, Hay, and Roosevelt. Adams frequently decried the rise of the "common man" and the decline of leading families such as his. Adams, like many intellectuals and political and business leaders of his time, was decidedly anti-Semitic, ethnocentric, anti-labor, and racist. "I believe," writes Brown, "that to understand much of America's history, and more specifically its movement in the late nineteenth century toward an imperial, industrial identity, one both increasingly beholden to technology and concerned with the fate of the white race, is to understand Henry Adams."

Brown devotes a lot of attention to Adams's relationships with his wife, Marion "Clover" Hoopes and, following her suicide in a fit of depression, Elizabeth Cameron, the exceptionally beautiful, sympathetic, and intelligent wife of a senator and part of the famous Sherman family of

Ohio. It is through his hundreds of letters to his platonic lover Cameron, quoted at length in Brown's book, that we get to know Adams' many thoughts, ambitions, opinions, and frequent bouts of depression. We see that Adams wanted to enter politics and hold positions of public trust, but when this proved impossible, his resignation and his choice to be a political and cultural commentator became his chosen way of life.

Brown's *The Last American Aristocrat* is a brilliant study of one of the most complex and influential characters of American history. This is also a character study of other leading people of his time like John Hay and Senator Lodge. The book is beautifully written, professionally researched, and a great pleasure to read.

**Claudio Saunt, *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2020. ISBN: 978-0393609844. 416 pp.**

Historian Claudio Saunt has written an explosive account of the expulsion of between 80,000 to 100,000 Native Americans over the course of the 1830s from their lands and homes in the Southeastern United States to unknown territories west of the Mississippi River. This was but one episode since early colonial days where white settlers had been waging war against Native Americans seeking to shove them aside. By the 1830s, the settlers had driven Indians in New England close to extinction. Now it was time to drive out the Native Americans in the Southeast.

The native tribes lived peaceful lives as farmers on land they claimed was theirs. A few of their leaders had adapted themselves into White society becoming fully literate in English and able to function in a White world. But, when the expulsion process started in the early 1830s, all natives were forced to leave their homes and property to move and to an empty arid land west of the Mississippi. Only the determined Seminoles in Florida resisted and were able to virtually defeat a massive federal army in the swamp lands of Florida.

Saunt argues that the Indian Removal in places like western Georgia, northern Alabama and Mississippi, and Florida was unprecedented in its ferocity and cruelty. It was indeed a "formal, state administered process" that was aimed at the expulsion of every single native person residing east of the Mississippi. This experience later served as a template for other twentieth century regimes that sought to remove whole populations from a given region. Indeed, it was Hitler who announced in 1941 that the "Volga must be our Mississippi."

There were many reasons for this expulsion. There is a band of black fertile soil that extended from northern Georgia westward across northern Alabama and northern Mississippi that White slave holders in the South desired to exploit. It was a boom period for cotton production and this swath of land held enormous potential for the bountiful expansion both of cotton, but also of slavery throughout the deep South. This meant that all the one hundred thousand Indians, including the large settlement of Cherokees, would have to be driven from their traditional lands—much of it previously agreed to in treaties between the Natives and the federal government in the dispossession movement.

Saunt suggests another deeper reason for this sudden urge to drive away the Indians—racism that involved white supremacy at its worst. White men were in control—in control of the land, the slaves, and the plantations that were bringing them great wealth. However, as long as there were other free non-whites living on the land, white supremacy had not gained a full measure of control.

President Andrew Jackson, himself a famous Indian fighter, strongly endorsed the expulsion movement in southern states such as Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi. It was ordinary White citizens and the political leaders they elected who clamored together to drive out the Cherokees and other tribes who stood in their way. A bill passed narrowly in Congress to involve the federal government in the forced removal of the natives. When people in the North protested, Southerners reminded them that they too had driven out the Indians of New England and New York a century or more before.

Professor Saunt goes into great detail about how and why the expulsion movement began, describing a scenario where the natives were cheated and driven off their own land. We learn about the utter misery they experienced as they marched west with bare feet, little clothing, and little food, and how many were forced onto dangerous overcrowded ships on cold rivers, and how many natives died along the way.

Saunt's book is professionally written and brilliantly researched. Several newspapers have listed this work as one of the most notable books of 2020. No other book on this topic can compare with the high-quality research and depth of what Saunt has given us. We as a nation must forever be ashamed for what we did in the 1830s. The truth really hurts, but still, everybody interested in American history should read this book.



# Bylaws of the Augusta County Historical Society

*Adopted May 7, 1964; Amended September 10, 1980; Amended 2012;  
Amended and Revised at the Spring Meeting of the ACHS membership  
held at the Wayne Theatre in Waynesboro on Sunday, March 28, 2021.*

## **ARTICLE I. – NAME**

This organization, founded in 1964, is Augusta County Historical Society, Inc., doing business as Augusta County Historical Society, and herein referred to as the “Society”. It is an Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is incorporated under the non-stock provisions of the Code of Virginia, Chapter 10 of Title 13.1.

## **ARTICLE II – LOCATION**

The Society shall have its principal office located within the boundary of Augusta County, Virginia, at a location determined by the Board of Directors.

## **ARTICLE III – PURPOSES**

The purposes of this Society are to promote interest in the history of the Augusta County area; to promote the discovery and preservation of papers, documents, books, objects, sties, places and buildings of historic interest; and to promote the study of and research into the archaeology and history of the Augusta County area and the genealogy and sociology of its inhabitants.

## **ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP**

A. The membership of the Society shall be composed of individuals and institutions who are interested in the accomplishment of the purposes of the Society and have applied for membership and paid the annual membership fee.

B. Classes of membership include family, individual, institutional, and student. Individual, family and grandfathered lifetime members shall have voice and vote in the Society.

C. Dues for each class shall be set by the Board of Directors. The full

dues amount is payable upon joining the Society. Thereafter, dues will be billed annually.

D. The Board of Directors may expel any member of the Society by a two-thirds vote of those voting.

## **ARTICLE V – MEETINGS OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY**

A. Regular Meetings - Two meetings of the membership of the Society shall be held during the calendar year at a day, time, place, and medium (in person, remote/virtual (including but not limited to teleconference or videoconference)) or hybrid as determined by the Board of Directors. The first meeting shall be held in the Spring. The second meeting, which shall be the Annual Meeting of the Society, shall be held in the Fall to receive reports from the officers and committees on the state of the Society; to elect and install directors and officers; and to take appropriate action on such matters as shall be recommended by the Board of Directors.

B. Special Meetings - Special meetings may be called by the President or the Board of Directors for a stated purpose.

C. Notice of Meetings – Written notice of all meetings shall be mailed to the membership at least thirty (30) days prior to said meeting.

D. Quorum – Ten (10) percent of the membership represented in person or by proxy shall constitute a quorum.

E. Voting – Each membership shall have one (1) vote.

## **ARTICLE VI - ELECTION OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS**

A. Nominations - The Nominating Committee shall submit a slate of officers and directors at the Annual Meeting of the membership. Nominations may also be made from the floor.

B. Qualification - Candidates for election shall be individual active members. Directors who have served two (2) terms must rotate off the Board for one (1) year before being eligible for nomination again.

C. Election - All officers and directors shall be elected by a majority of votes cast at the Fall Annual meeting.

D. Terms – Directors and officers elected at the Annual Meeting shall begin their term of office on January 1 of the following year. Directors shall serve a term of three (3) years and may succeed themselves for one term. Officers shall serve a term of two (2) years and may succeed themselves for one term. The offices of Secretary, Treasurer, Archivist and Associate Archivist shall serve with no limit on number of terms for the convenience of the Society.

E. Vacancies – In the event of a vacancy in the office of President, the President-Elect shall assume the office. Vacancies of any other officers or directors may be filled by a vote of the Board of Directors for the unexpired term of office.

## **ARTICLE VII – BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

A. Composition – The Board of Directors shall be comprised of not less than eleven (11) or more than twenty-one (21) persons who have been qualified and elected officers and directors by the membership. The Immediate Past President shall be a member of the Board ex-officio and may attend meetings with voting power, but is not bound to do so, and is not counted in the required quorum.

B. Responsibilities – The Board of Directors shall exercise supervision over all affairs of the Society, shall decide questions of policy and perform such other functions as designated in these bylaws, law, or otherwise assigned to them. Employment of professional staff for the Society, duties and compensation, rests with the Board.

C. Meetings – The Board of Directors shall meet at least quarterly or on call by the President or at the request of any three (3) members of the Board.

D. Quorum – A majority of the elected directors shall constitute a quorum.

## **ARTICLE VIII - OFFICERS**

A. Officers - The officers shall be a President, a President-Elect, a Recording Secretary, a Treasurer, an Archivist, and an Associate Archivist.

B. President - The President shall have executive supervision over the activities of the Society within the scope provided by these bylaws, shall

preside at all meetings, shall report annually on the activities of the Society and shall appoint all committees except the Nominating Committee. The President shall establish a proposed regular schedule of meetings and can, in addition, call special meetings of the Board of Directors, and shall perform any others duties incidental to this office or as assigned by the Board.

C. President-Elect – The President-Elect shall assume the duties of the President in event of the absence, incapacity or resignation of the President, and may be assigned duties by the President. The President-Elect is also responsible for the planning of the Spring and Fall meetings of the Society, and any other duties assigned by the Board.

D. Secretary – The Secretary shall keep the minutes and attendance of meetings of the Society, the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee, and shall make reports, attest legal documents and perform such other duties as are incidental of this office, by law, or as assigned by the President or Board.

E. Treasurer – The Treasurer shall have general supervision over all Society funds, financial records, deposits and disbursements. Expenditures shall be paid by numbered checks, signed by the Treasurer, or in the Treasurer's absence, by the President. All expenditures shall be supported by an invoice or other memorandum. The Treasurer shall oversee the collection of dues and other income, shall make reports to the Board of Directors and an annual report to the membership. He or she shall perform or oversee these duties, tax filings and government reports if delegated to staff and shall perform such other duties as may be required by law, these bylaws or assigned by the Board.

F. Archivist and Associate Archivist – The Archivist and/or Associate Archivist shall oversee all personal property acquired by the Society (as distinguished from funds and securities). A careful accounting shall be made of the Society's collection. The Archivist and Associate Archivist shall report to the membership, and as otherwise directed by the Board of Directors, on the status and condition of the collection and shall make recommendations with regard to their use, insurability, preservation, display and disposal and the acquisition of additional items.

G. Term – The officers shall be elected for a term of two years. The President and President-Elect may succeed themselves for one term; the Secretary, Treasurer, Archivist and Associate Archivist shall have no limit on number of terms served.

H. Vacancies – A vacancy in the office of President shall be filled by the President-Elect. Vacancies in any other office may be filled by election of the Board of Directors for the unexpired term.

## **ARTICLE IX - EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

A. Composition - The President, the President-Elect, the Recording Secretary, the Treasurer, and two (2) at-large members of the Board as designated by the Board of Directors shall constitute the Executive Committee.

B. Responsibilities - The Executive Committee shall have all power of the Board of Directors, except such power as the Board by resolution shall reserve for itself. Supervision of any staff rests with the Executive Committee.

C. Meetings and Quorum – The Executive Committee shall meet as needed with majority present to transact business.

## **ARTICLE X - COMMITTEES**

A. The President shall appoint chairs and members from the membership to the standing committees, except the Nominating Committee, and shall appoint any other committees or taskforces as necessary to assist in the planning and development of activities of the Society, and shall be ex-officio of each, except the Nominating Committee.

There is no limit to the amount of time a person can serve as chair or on a committee.

A. History and Archives Committee - Responsible for collecting, cataloging, managing, and repairing books, manuscripts, newspapers, historical source data, photographs and artifacts in the society's collection. Responsible for recommending sites, structures, and districts for consideration as local, state or national landmarks, and for promoting the preservation of these and other sites of historic importance.



B. Membership Committee - Responsible for membership drives encouraging persons having an interest in the history of Augusta County to become active members of the Society.

C. Nominations Committee - Appointed by the Board of Directors, responsible for nominations for officers and members of the Board of Directors.

D. Program and Special Events Committee - Responsible for arranging and scheduling meetings and other programs as well as special events.

E. Publications Committee - Responsible for publishing a journal containing articles of historical interest of Augusta County and the surrounding area. Responsible for finding ways for publishing joint or individual research studies, periodicals, or books of historical interest.

F. Publicity Committee - Responsible for publicizing the work and activities of the Society through newsletters to members and through releases of information to the newspapers, radio, television, and other media. This committee is chaired by the President-Elect.

G. Smith Center Committee – Responsible for representing the Society on the Smith Center Foundation Board.

## **ARTICLE XI - COMPENSATION**

Directors and Officers of the Society, ex-officio directors, committee members, members or volunteers, shall receive no compensation for their service in these capacities, except they may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in performance of official duties on behalf of the Society as approved by the Board of Directors, or paid for other professional services rendered with Board approval.

## **ARTICLE XII - FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

A. Fiscal Year – The fiscal year shall be June 1 to May 31.

B. The Society shall use its funds only to accomplish the objectives and purposes specified in these Bylaws and no part of these funds shall inure, or be distributed to or for the benefit of the officers, directors or members.

C. Funds – All funds, notes, receipts and disbursements of the Society shall be under the direction and control of the Board of Directors with general supervision by the Treasurer.

D. Depository – All funds of the Society shall be deposited, invested, and disbursed in the name of Augusta County Historical Society, Inc., in an institution selected by the Board of Directors.

E. Disbursements - Funds up to the amount of \$2,500 may be drawn upon any one signature, from a combined pool consisting of at least three designated Board members and the Executive Director, if one. Disbursements over \$2,500 must be drawn upon the signatures of two from the combined pool of authorized signatures. No disbursements shall be made unless they have been budgeted or approved by the Board. All disbursements must be evidenced by statements, vouchers, receipts or other records which shall be presented to the Auditing Committee.

F. Audit – A financial review or audit shall be conducted annually after the end of each fiscal year, and report presented to the Board and to the Annual Meeting of the Membership of the Society.

G. Authority to Bind Association – The President, or President-Elect, Treasurer, and/or the Executive Director if there is one, may enter into any contract or execute or deliver any instrument on behalf of the Society which has been approved by the Board of Directors. No other director, officer, employee or member shall have the authority to bind the Association financially or otherwise.

### **ARTICLE XIII - CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY**

A. No member of the Board of Directors, any committee chair, committee member, any member or ex-officio member shall derive any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation with the Society nor shall they use their position on the Board or committee or membership to directly benefit any other board, organization or individual. Each individual shall disclose to the Board of Directors any personal interest or other board conflict that he or she may have in any matter pending before the Society and shall refrain from participation in any discussion or decision on such matter and such abstention shall be recorded in the appropriate minutes.

B. No director, officer, committee chair or committee member, any member or ex-officio member shall presume to endorse in the name of or in behalf of the Society any person, activity, entity or matter without the authority of the Board of Directors.

C. The Society shall be non-profit, non-partisan, non-sectarian and shall take no part in attempting to influence any legislation, or lend its influence to the nomination, election, or appointment of any candidates for federal, state, county or city offices.

#### **ARTICLE XIV - ELECTRONIC AND MAIL COMMUNICATIONS**

Meetings held electronically via videoconference or teleconference shall be deemed as official meetings if a quorum exists and minutes recorded. In critical, emergency, or meeting follow-up situations, voting or polling via U. S. mail, email, or telephone shall be official and binding if a quorum exists and results recorded. Email or telephone meeting votes or polls are for time-sensitive or emergency situations and shall not be in lieu of required regularly scheduled personal meetings whether in-person or by videoconference, and all provisions of these Bylaws apply.

#### **ARTICLE XV – REMOTE PARTICIPATION IN ANNUAL AND SPECIAL MEETINGS**

A. Members may participate in any meeting of members by means of remote communication to the extent the board of directors authorizes such participation for members. Participation by means of remote communication shall be subject to such guidelines and procedures the board of directors adopts, and shall be in conformity with subsection B.

B. Members participating in a members' meeting by means of remote communication shall be deemed present and may vote at such a meeting if the Board of D has implemented reasonable measures to:

1. Verify that each person participating remotely is a member or a member's proxy; and
2. Provide such members a reasonable opportunity to participate in the meeting and to vote on matters submitted to the members, including an opportunity to read or hear the proceedings of the meeting, substantially concurrently with such proceedings.

C. Unless the articles of incorporation or bylaws require the meeting of members to be held at a place, the board of directors may determine that any meeting of members shall not be held at any place and shall instead be held solely by means of remote communication in conformity with subsection B.

#### **ARTICLE XVI - PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE**

The proceedings of all meetings of the Society shall be guided by the latest edition of “Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised”, in all cases not addressed by law or these Bylaws.

#### **ARTICLE XVII- DISSOLUTION OR MERGER**

A. The Society may at any Spring or Fall Meeting, or any Special Meeting called for the purpose, with thirty (30) days written notice of date, time and place, by a vote by two-thirds (2/3) of members present in person or by proxy, discontinue its operation and settle its affairs, or merge with another corporation.

B. On dissolution, any funds and property, including the historical archives, remaining after settlement of debts shall be distributed to one or more regularly organized and qualified organizations in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3) for non-profits and as selected by the Board of Directors, or in the case of merger, said remaining funds and property shall be merged with the new corporation’s funds and property.

#### **ARTICLE XVIII - AMENDMENTS**

These Bylaws may be amended, repealed, or revised in whole or in part, by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership present in person or by proxy at any regular Annual Meeting or special meeting called for that purpose, provided that such proposed changes are included with the written notice of said meeting and mailed to each member thirty (30) days in advance of such meeting. Amended or revised Bylaws shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

**Approved: March 28, 2021**

**Signed: Nancy Sorrells, President**

**Attest: Linda Petzke, Secretary**

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